A MASTER OF THE INNER COURT

MARY POLK WINN

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00020346395

Class PZ3

Book W72M

Copyright No.

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

"You see, Mr. Bonnycastle, we are not at all anxious to marry."—Page 59.

A MASTER OF THE INNER COURT

By

MARY POLK WINN

Author "Law and the Letter"
and Short Stories.

BROADWAY PUBLISHING CO.

835 Broadway New York City

PZ3
.W72
M

Copyright, 1915
By
MARY POLK WINN

$1.35
JAN 24 1916
©CLA418691
Nov 1.

To "Rand"

A MASTER OF THE INNER COURT

CHAPTER I

The light from the leaping fire flickered over the beautiful room, where quiet brooded. On the hearth rug before the fire lay a child, asleep, and in a lounging chair close by, with her bit of needlework even now slipping from her relaxing hand. Marjorie Wyngate sat, in drowsy yielding to the atmosphere of luxurious comfort and warmth about her.

But hardly had she dropped asleep before she awoke with a strangled cry, and stared wildly about her, hardly recognizing in her terrors the familiar objects about her. The fire, still leaping and falling in the great fireplace, cast its ever-varying yet accustomed glow over her, over her boy still sleeping on the floor at her feet. It was all as it had been a few moments before, and yet nothing seemed real about her but the terror of her vision that even yet was passing vividly before her waking eyes.

In her dream she had seen three figures, two men and a dog, upon a bridge which spanned a deep but narrow ravine. One of these men, their faces she could not see, stumbled and fell. As he struggled to his feet, the other man, the taller of the

two, pushed the man who had fallen from the bridge into the seething water below. This tragedy, enacted before her eyes in a vision, Marjorie knew to be, in some way, of vital interest to herself, and her horror was so great that she was unable either to move or speak. Cold beads of perspiration stood upon her brow, her hands were clammy, she shivered as if from cold. Gradually, as her terror was allayed, she laughed at her fears. and bending down pressed her cheek close to that of her sleeping child.

Rand was a beautiful boy. He lay as he had fallen asleep while at play, his head resting on his arm, showing a rosy cheek swept by dark curling lashes. His lips still held their babyish curve, and as he slept they parted in a smile.

Attempting to forget her vision, Marjorie smiled back. Of what did he dream? Of some childish game? Rand always played with all his heart. To-morrow his father would return to them, and they would all be happy together again. Wyngate had been called away to a city in the East on some family business matters, and now that they had been satisfactory arranged he expected to return at once. Glancing round at her books and pictures, her husband's desk, her boy's treasures scattered about the room, Marjorie could hardly realize that she had spent five years in this happy home. There had been but one cloud.

Her husband, Laurence Wyngate, was an only child. His father had died a short time before their marriage, but Marjorie had expected from his mother a daughter's welcome. Mrs. Wyngate, however, never recognized her son's marriage by so much as a line to either of them, and although Laurence had resented his mother's silence, he

seemed to be unable to discuss it. Realizing that from cause obscure to herself, her husband's mother had not approved of his choice, Marjorie, too, had rarely alluded to her.

With a sigh, she dismissed the subject from her mind, and after giving her boy his simple supper and his bedtime story, tucked him away for the night in his little white bed near her own. Then an almost unprecedented experience in her happy and tranquil life, through the long hours of the night she lay awake. Finally she rose, and walking to a window. drew back the curtain.

Over the sleeping city the dawn lay brooding. From the sky the stars had faded, and a deep line of orange light in the East was paling into gold. In a house across the street she saw a servant turning out the lights; the hoofs of the horses in an ice-wagon struck sharply against the cobble stones of the frozen street. She could almost discern the bare trees and gray outline of the statuary in a little park where she often took Rand to play; she recalled with amusement a statute of Minerva which had been struck by a mammoth fire cracker at a patriotic celebration. Rand in a trembling voice had called out to a burly policeman: "Come quick, Mr. Officer! A skyrocket has hit Miss Minerva!" Still gazing out she saw a newsboy running to keep warm as he delivered the morning papers along his route.

The new day dispelled Marjorie's nervousness, and with a lighter heart she ran down to the door for the morning paper. A messenger boy crossed the street. He was coming toward her. With hands that trembled Marjorie took the telegram from him, and read: "Lawerence Wyngate was

killed last evening in an accident while on a hunting excursion."

Signed: "F. Talbert."

For a moment she stood quite still, unable to collect her thoughts, and then, the telegram falling from her hand, she lost consciousness.

CHAPTER II

In a small town the principal hostelry is always a center of social life. This is the starting point from which the stage carries passengers to and from the daily trains, and, if from its cumbrous depths a stranger steps, this is the sensation of the day. Even the loafers who sit with chairs tilted against the wall, in the office, or about the open doors, straighten up with sudden alacrity, and take the newcomer in with speculative interest.

On the afternoon of which I write, in a Southern village, suspended above the open door of the principal hotel, a sign bearing the imposing inscription, "The Washington Hotel," waved slowly in a gentle breeze.

The stage had just come in, and while several people on the sidewalk stopped to look on with open mouthed interest, the fat clerk ran down the hotel steps with unusual alacrity to assist three passengers from the stage.

One was a young woman dressed in deep mourning, with a veil drawn over her face. She was followed by an old negress who held a little boy closely by the hand.

"Such a pity house! Is this where Gen. George Washington lived?" the little boy asked, fastening innocent eyes upon the newly painted sign of the Washington Hotel.

The young woman, drawing back her veil smiled. It was the first time that Marjorie Wyngate had

smiled in many months. Not since the terrible day that had brought the news of her husband's sudden death. The weeks that followed would always be a blank to Marjorie, for the shock, following so soon her strange vision, had caused a long illness.

When at last she was well enough to take up life again, she had been given a letter from a lawyer representing the Wyngate family in the East, informing her that her husband's death had been caused by an accident, while on a hunting trip in the Adirondack Mountains. That as he had been crossing over a narrow bridge that spanned a mountain stream, in the darkness he had stumbled and fallen. "F. Talbert," his hunting companion and friend of Oxford days, had summoned help but her husbands' body had been washed swiftly away in the swollen stream, and never recovered.

This Mr. Talbert, she was told, had been most kind and after doing all in his power in regard to his friend, had departed for Havre to meet the elder Mrs. Wyngate in Paris, and give her the particulars of the tragedy. With this letter couched in the cold term of legal particularity, there had been another, a letter from the senior Mrs. Wyngate's lawyer sent from her home in Paris, directing her American lawyer to pay her daughter-in-law for her son's child a monthly allowance.

This allowance had continued for several months, and then with no reason assigned, had been discontinued.

This meant to Marjorie the difference between poverty and comparative comfort, and while undecided what she should do, a letter came to her that stirred her from the sorrowful present into memories of her childhood.

This letter was from Mrs. Clay, who had been a

neighbor and an intimate friend of her mother's. She wrote urging Marjorie to come with Rand and Mammy and make her a long visit. With Mrs. Clay's cordial invitation she inclosed a newspaper clipping that interested Marjorie very much. It was to the effect that a certain Madame d'Holbret wished to secure a young woman of suitable attainments to act as her secretary.

If she was not mistaken, this Madame d'Holbret was the person who, by paying off a small mortgage, had bought in the "Shelter," her Grandmother's old home. Remembering it, the Southern fragrance of jasmine and honeysuckle was wafted by to Marjorie. She saw an old fashioned garden, with trim walks bordered with box, and a rose-covered arbor where her grandmother entertained the country elite. Among them she remembered Mr. Robin Bonnycastle, the most charming man she had ever met! She had no time now, however, to pursue this train of thought. Marjorie was consumed with a desire to once again be in her old home, to take her child there. Without delay she wrote accepting Mrs. Clay's invitation, and at the same time sent a letter to Madame d'Holbret applying for the position of secretary.

Very soon the reply came that Madame d'Holbret would like to see Mrs. Wyngate in person before arriving at any definite decision. Not many days later, with Rand and Mammy, an old negress who had been in the family for several generations and was now Rand's nurse, Marjorie started on her journey. On arriving at her destination she decided to go first to the little hostelry in the village, and after sending a message to notify Mrs. Clay of her arrival, she now sat awaiting her old friend.

On hearing an exclamation from Rand, Marjorie looked up, and saw a tall woman advancing toward her with outstretched arms. Mrs. Clay gave Marjorie a motherly embrace, and then drawing about her ample skirts, she drew Rand into her arms.

"My dear Marjorie, how glad I am to welcome you back to your childhood's home. You should have come at once to me. Mr. Clay wishes me to say for him also that you are to consider our house your home."

"Tut, tut, my dear!" Mrs. Clay said, as Rand put up his little brown hand, and patting his mother on the cheek, wiped a tear from her eyes. "Can not a friendship that has endured through many generations give one a right to give and receive such proof? Besides, can we forget that four generations ago the intermarriages between our families began, when one of your ancestors, a Randolph, married a Kentucky Semple? This of course makes us relations."

"Dat is 'zackly what I been sayin' all de time, Miss." exclaimed Mammy, taking advantage of her age and long service. "All folks that *is* folks am *kin* folks."

Mrs. Clay turned upon Mammy an approving smile.

"What a darling Rand is!" she said, giving the little boy in her arms a covert hug, while Rand, opening his blue eyes, regarded her with interest. "He is well grown, too, brown and hearty, which is certainly astonishing when you remember, poor lamb, that he has never spent a day in his life out of a city."

"I hoped that Appolina would come with you," Marjorie said, smiling with pleasure at Mrs. Clay's enthusiasm over Rand.

"Appolina is not at home," Mrs. Clay replied, her face suddenly grave. "She went up to the city to a 'Tango Tea.' I saw a picture of the dancing." Mrs. Clay cast her eyes at the ceiling and shuddered. "When I remonstrated with Appolina, however, she replied: 'My dear mother, modesty was once quite a fad, it is now out of fashion. Some day it may come back again.'"

"I see that Appolina is as spoiled as ever," Marjorie replied with an amused smile. "You say that dear Mr. Clay is as well as usual, and still studying American History? Now do tell me something of Mr. Bonnycastle and of Decimus Clay."

"Decimus is on his plantation, and still faithful to his early love." Mrs. Clay regarded Marjorie for a moment with a rather quizzical expression, "My brother, Robin Bonnycastle, is well and as you remember, the most charming of men. He rarely leaves 'Robin's Roost,' and yet," Mrs. Clay lowered her voice, "he is often absent for days."

In response to Marjorie's look of bewilderment, Mrs. Clay only leaned over and kissed her. "And now I wish you to tell me something of youself."

"There is very little to tell that I have not written you," Marjorie replied simply, "I now await a notification from Madame d'Holbret as to what time she wishes me to call, she may then arrive at some decision in regard to my becoming her secretary. d'Holbret is the name of the party who, by paying up a small mortgage, bought in my old home. I was not even notified of the transaction. Do you know anything of Madame d'Holbret?"

"Madame d'Holbret has lived abroad, and is quite like a foreigner," Mrs. Clay replied, impressively. "I am told that she is very reserved, but Dr. Pell, our new physician, an inquisitive little

man, had the temerity to call upon her. She gave him to understand that she is an American and descended from one of the early settlers of New York. Many of the descendants of these same Dutch tradesmen have made the largest fortunes our country can boast. Since her arrival, Madame d'Holbret has left the place but once when she went in a closed carriage to the village, and was closeted with lawyer Jasper. That is not all, my dear, her second husband is a French nobleman, so that she is a *Baroness*. Of course people will gossip."

As Mrs. Clay finished speaking she rose to her feet, and having warmly embraced Marjorie and Rand, she glanced about the room at their dingy surroundings with evident disapprobation. "I will not leave here," she said, "until you promise not to spend another hour beneath this roof. I shall send over at once for your belongings." Having complied with this request, Marjorie stood for some time at the window watching Mrs. Clay's tall figure as it gradually disappeared down the village street.

CHAPTER III

Long French windows opened from the "Shelter" upon a broad terrace, and from this one passed through the rose covered arbor into a garden that at some time long past had been laid out by a landscape gardener.

Now the borders of box were no longer kept trimly clipped, and in the beds the flowers grew together in tangled masses of brilliant color. Near the center of the garden water trickled slowly from the mouth of a time worn gargoyle into a stone basin, and not far off the shadow finger of a sun-dial pointed toward noon. Before the windows opening out upon the terrace, however, the heavy green blinds were still closely drawn.

Madame d'Holbret, fatigued by the incidents of the day before, had not risen as early as was her wont. In her pleasant bedroom overlooking the garden, she lay in a massive bedstead canopied with silk so startlingly new, in contrast with the ancient piece of furniture, that it gave it the aspect of a stately old aristocrat attired in the flashy garb of a parvenu.

On a table by her bedside lay a long slender cane and near her hand there was a silver bell.

Madame d'Holbret felt that she should rise, but was reluctant to make the effort; she began to fear that the Southern climate, sought by her for her health, might prove enervating. She had been somewhat of an invalid for several years, and had just returned from a three months' course of treat-

ment for rheumatism at a neighboring Springs. Most of the work of renovating this old place had stopped short, awaiting her return, and there was plenty to fill her days for a long time to come, but her invalidism made her sink back again into her pillows, and she glanced appraisingly about the room which, except for its new silk draperies, was as it had been when she had bought in the estate. Evidently the old lady to whom the home had belonged before its forced sale to cover a small mortgage, had been a person of means and luxurious tastes. Very likely, she had been a proud descendant of one of those Virginia cavaliers, brave and gallant gentlemen, who, when not fighting for their country or their honor (they were certainly most punctilious in this respect) had spent their substance on good living, horse races and the fighting of gamecocks. Her own ancestors had been good Dutch tradesmen, early settlers of Manhattan, who had left to their descendants habits of industry and thrift, as well as the golden fruits of these virtues. At present, Madame d'Holbret found the luxurious tastes of her predecessor convenient! The coverlet that, although it was quite warm, she now drew up over her feet, was made of eiderdown, the sheets were of linen and the furniture massive and handsome. And all bought in for a mere song!

None knew better than she the curiosity of the countryside over her and her household, over the new owner of "The Shelter." Dr. Pell's naive interest, lawyer Jaspers' ill-concealed pryings, did not fill her with resentment at all, but she left all their yearnings for information unsatisfied.

The smile that showed itself on Madame d'Holbret's face at this thought was followed by a faint laugh, loud enough, it may have been, to be heard

on the outside of the door, for immediately there was a knock, and a faded looking lady projecting her body partly into the room, timidly inquired if Madame had called? Receiving an imperious answer in the negative, the head was quickly withdrawn and the door closed softly.

The expression of the mistress of The Shelter had changed to one of slight annoyance. The interruption had reminded her of a Mrs. Wyngate who had replied to her advertisement for a private secretary. It seemed that this Mrs. Wyngate had arrived in the village and that she was staying somewhere near with one of her friends. She had been notified that she could call at 11 o'clock, but Madame d'Holbret was very comfortable, and she still felt loathe to rise.

Someone who had seen Mrs. Wyngate spoke of her as being attractive, with a personality that might become a presumption in a paid attendant. This was an objection, besides she had a child. Madame d'Holbret had caught a glimpse of the little boy as he ran laughing past her window, and he reminded her of— of a child she remembered in the past! This resemblance might be imaginary, however, the name a coincidence. The Baroness' black brows met in a heavy frown, and then with closed introspective eyes, she lay back among her pillows. The matter must be settled, however, before the arrival of her husband, the Baron; nothing should annoy him. Answering this thought, she arose and touched sharply a silver bell.

In the meantime, Marjorie, who had received a stiff note from Madame d'Holbret making an appointment for her to call, now stood ringing, rather timidly, the doorbell of her old home. It seemed almost past comprehension that here in this home

that had sheltered her childhood, that she should now await the convenience of a stranger; and when a maid informed her that Madame d'Holbret had not yet arisen, but would be glad to see her later, it was with a sense of relief that she hurried from the door.

Walking to the side of the house, she followed a winding path that led into the grove, and here she took her seat beneath the hanging boughs of a huge oak that she remembered as one of her early friends. With closed eyes, Marjorie lay back her head against the bole of the great tree. She felt strangely bewildered. To adjust one's self to new conditions, when the old have become a part of one's soul ,is one of life's most difficult lessons, and while Marjorie had girded up her strength so that she felt ready now to take upon herself the unaccustomed burden of economic independence for Rand and herself, for the first time she found herself questioning fate.

Gradually, however, the scene about her brought her peace. Through her half-closed lids she could see on one side the white colonial house of the Clays, on the other, the dense grove of trees that hid from sight "Robin's Roost," the home of Mr. Robin Bonnycastle. Near by, through the trees, rose the tall red chimneys, sloping roof, and broad veranda of "The Shelter." Above her a boisterous woodpecker drilled in his insatiated desire for sap, and a little higher up a bright-eyed squirrel peeped out from its hiding place.

Rand had walked over with her, but "Uncle Henry," her grandmother's old gardener, black as the soil to which he had been faithful, and now in the employ of Madame d'Holbret, had enticed him off into the garden.

Marjorie's heavy heart grew light, and her face radiant, for across the sunlit lawn she now saw Rand running toward her. In his hand he held a paper box and his blue eyes were gleaming with delight. "Four frogs, Mama! Uncle Henry says they ran so fast that he is sure they are all little boys, and I brought them to you for your birthday."

Laughing, Marjorie drew Rand nearer to her, and then to show due appreciation of his gift, she looked into the box from which four green frogs stared miserably back at her from the loophole of this prison.

"What makes them have such hoarse voices?" Rand asked suddenly.

"Don't you remember the frog who would a-wooing go, whether his mother would or no?" Marjorie replied. "Probably he was punished for his disobedience by taking cold and ever since frogs have had to croak! Generations ago a Grandmother or a Grandfather frog was taken from its green home in a branch by a little boy like you. He put it into a box, and it was so astonished to find itself there that its eyes popped. Since then pop-eyes have belonged to the frog family and are now regarded as marks of beauty."

Rand looked thoughtful. "But these frogs did not come from a branch," he objected, "they were under a tree."

"Very likely; then, Rand, the frog family is a very old one, and all the little frogs who are too proud or too lazy to work spend their time beneath its branches."

"Mr. Clay has a family tree, I saw it in the library," Rand replied, with childish astuteness.

As they discussed the frogs, they could see Uncle

Henry working in the garden, and faintly catch the words of the hymn that he sang. All about them were stillness, and shadows, and sweet odors.

"Do you see the Lord walking with Uncle Henry, he says he walked with the Lord," Rand said, sleepily, and then, his head against his mother's shoulder, his long lashes resting upon his flushed cheeks, he lay apparently asleep, when suddenly rubbing his eyes, he sat up.

From the house there was coming toward them a lady. She was very fragile looking, and in her faintly tinted summer gown, she seemed almost to form a part of the landscape. As she drew near, and her figure took definite shape against the bole of the tree, Marjorie remembered that she had seen her passing, and that Mrs. Clay had said that she was a relation and companion of Madame d'Holbret, and that she was called "Miss Araminta."

When Miss Araminta drew near she stopped for a minute and regarded Marjorie and Rand as if she were slightly agitated, and then she took Marjorie's hand with a deprecating smile.

"Madame d'Holbret asked me to say to you that she would be pleased to see you at once. Would you object to going back to the house alone, and allow me to stay here with Rand for a little while?" she asked timidly.

Marjorie noticed how sweet Miss Araminta's voice was, and as Rand held out his hand and made a place for her by his side, she hurried off, feeling sure that Miss Araminta was a very nice person. For children and animals have instinct, while we poor grown-ups have only a weak and frequently mistaken reasoning power that leads us into many erroneous opinions in regard to our fellow beings.

CHAPTER IV

Marjorie found Madame d'Holbret in a room overlooking the terrace that brought back many recollections of her childhood. The great teester bedstead in the corner, with steps to mount up to the feather bed, she felt sure were the identical pair she had climbed upon as a child to nibble off bits of wax from the taper that had invariably stood by her grandmother's bedside. Through the open windows came the fragrance from arbors of roses and beds of old-fashioned flowers.

Seated in a large chair, with her head turned from the door, Madame d'Holbret's proud and handsome profile was sharply defined against the light. A huge dog, so like a wolf that Marjorie was startled, lay near her feet.

She made no movement as Marjorie came into the room, but with an almost imperceptible nod indicated a chair near the window. Then, as if actuated by some disturbing thought, she grasped a cane that lay near her hand, and sharply tapped upon the bare oaken floor.

The dog opened his eyes with a growl, and turning to quiet him, Madame d'Holbret showed that only one side of her face was handsome; the other high cheek bone was disfigured by a scar, which took the form of the imprint of a hand. It gave a sinister expression to her face, and her care in arranging her position showed that it caused her some chagrin.

For a moment she sat silently contemplating

Marjorie with an air of hauteur which changed to a keen scrutiny. She looked as if she were appraising her possible employee from every point of view, in order to make up her mind once for all how valuable this young woman's services would be to her. Marjorie gazed steadily back at her, with the feeling that much might depend upon the first impression, trying to keep in mind that Rand's comfort was being weighed in the balance.

"Marjorie Wyngate, you say, is your name?" she asked coldly.

Marjorie flushed before she could answer. Madam d'Holbret interposed.

"It is necessary to guard against imposters, and your name interests me slightly. Have you a relative of a similar name who married a Wyngate?"

"Not that I know of, but, curiously enough, in our old home I read in the newspaper of a Mrs. Wyngate who had died, and thought it a coincidence that we should have the same name, or one so similar, for I am under the impression that her name was Margaret. She and her little son were the victims of an epidemic of diphtheria."

The Baroness leaned her gray head back against her chair, an expression, almost of relief, passing over her face.

"The name Margaret must have been used for Marjorie," she said reflectively.

Marjorie looked at her with some surprise, as she made what to her seemed an irrelevant remark.

"Since you are here I will see if you are capable of filling the position of secretary," Madam d'Holbret continued, but the boy, what will you do with him?"

"I thought you understood, when I replied to

your letter, that I will never be separated from my boy."

Unconsciously, Marjorie drew herself up as she spoke.

"You can come over to-morrow," the Baroness said hurriedly, with a curt nod of dismissal, while a wonderful transformation passed over the face that had before regarded Marjorie so narrowly. The eyes that were small, and near together, lighted up now with eager expectation, seeming to grow larger and farther apart. She had risen from her chair, and stood smoothing down the folds of her silk neglige, while footsteps in the hall drew nearer. Marjorie's attention was attracted, however, by another sound. The dog had risen on his haunches, his gums drawn back showed long white fangs, and his bloodshot eyes were fixed upon the doorway, where, turning, she saw that the portière was drawn gently aside, and a gentleman stood within the doorway.

He was young, very foreign, distinguished looking.

The dog and the man regarded each other for a moment, the dog still showing his teeth, and then, with his face transformed by a charming smile, the stranger stepped swiftly across the floor.

"It seems that my son's dog, sent me after his death, bears you some grudge, Francis!" the Baroness said, smiling, an apology in her tone.

Drawing slowly together the portières, made of some beautiful East Indian fabric, as she left the room, Marjorie looked back to see that the young man had placed his arm familiarly about the elderly woman's waist, and then, wondering, she hurried down the steps.

Mrs. Clay had walked over to join Marjorie, and

she now stood awaiting her in the hall, looking about her with naive curiosity and some disdain at the various changes made in the old house.

Marjorie drew her into the long salon parlor that she remembered never to have entered in her childhood without some degree of awe.

Between the tall windows there was a glimpse of the lawn, while the niches in the walls, once filled with family portraits, now held foreign scenes that seemed incongruous with the handsome, though sombre room. The silver candelabra on the mantel held many branches, but there were no candles in them. Marjorie had often seen them lighted in her childhood, and recalled in fancy the weird light they cast over the long mirrors that now dimly reflected the two ladies standing together: Marjorie Wyngate, slender, and very fair in her black gown, and Mrs. Clay's majestic figure, her brilliant eyes, and hair snow white.

"Did you see him, Marjorie?" whispered Mrs. Clay, with excited interest.

"See whom?" Marjorie replied, absently; "Oh, you mean the gentleman who just went upstairs! Who is he?"

"Why, do you not know?" Mrs. Clay regarded Marjorie with astonishment. "That was the Baron, Madam d'Holbret's husband."

The two ladies exchanged a smile.

"But that is preposterous!" exclaimed Marjorie. "He must be at least twenty years younger than his wife."

"It is becoming the fashion to rear youths as husbands. The Baroness Buldette Coutt long ago established the precedent. And after all, if husbands are properly trained from their youth up—

the divorce courts——" Mrs. Clay lowered her voice discreetly, "may not be so full."

Marjorie's thoughts were not upon the divorce courts, however; she was thinking of Baron d'Holbret. Was it his name, or something in his face, or his figure that touched a chord in her memory? She could not tell.

"It seems that the Baron had an English mother, and for her sake he likes to be called Francis instead of Francois."

"I do not think the Baron gives the impression that he would have very much sentiment about his mother," Marjorie suggested.

"He is undoubtedly handsome, in the Lord Byron style," Mrs. Clay remarked. "But do tell me, Marjorie," she continued anxiously, "has Madam d'Holbret decided——"

"I am to go over to-morrow," replied Marjorie. "She suggests, however, for the present, I shall find lodgings outside the house on—on account of Rand." Her voice shook a little.

"She should be proud and pleased to have the blessed darling in the house, if just for the pleasure of looking at him!" Mrs. Clay exclaimed indignantly. "Of course, then, you will remain with us. You need not shake your head, my love, for I will not hear of anything else; Mr. Clay would be distressed to death. I must go now," she continued, gathering up her skirts with old fashioned precision. "Mr. Clay must have finished his siesta, and will be longing for his cup of tea."

"Rand and I will join you presently," said Marjorie brightly, "so tell Mr. Clay not to eat all the cake."

This was a time-honored threat of the invalid to Marjorie, who knew as well as he did, how rigid

was his diet. But it amused them both. There is something rather comforting about old jokes between friends.

Walking with Mrs. Clay to the gap in the hedge that divided the two places, Marjorie stood watching her tall figure until it was hidden in the trees, and then she listened to the strident notes of two brown thrushes perched on a twig near by. Kneeling down that she might see better into the hedge, she felt warm young arms encircle her waist, and with Rand's face pressed close to her own they peered into the nest.

CHAPTER V

Baron d'Holbret, the new owner of the "Shelter," stood in an upper room looking down upon the grove of trees. He had been making an inventory of the furniture in his room, in fact, of everything in the house.

This ancestral home with its belongings he had bought for his wife, who had lately returned to America. Gazing around upon his possessions, he felt that he had cause to congratulate himself.

Mrs. Randolph, the former owner of the property, had been, at the time of her death, a very old lady. She left but three heirs. One of these, whose name he had not learned, he had since discovered, through the carelessness of his lawyer, had never signed the deed that would have made the sale valid.

His wife, Madame d'Holbret, had definitely engaged a Mrs. Wyngate as her secretary. Her little boy was to remain with her, and this arrangement secured to Madame for a mere pittance, the services of an accomplished young woman. Baron d'Holbret had pointed out that in the evenings she could be useful as an accompanist, and in many other ways. The child's presence was not desirable, but would undoubtedly make her contented with her surroundings. The beautiful, sad face of this young woman haunted him. If only he had met her on his first visit to America, while he was making investigations as to the property of a wealthy

widow he had met at Vevey! That property he had intended to secure for himself some day. "F. Talbert" had sent the telegram—since that time F. Talbert——. An enigmatic smile crossed the Baron's face. Pacing restlessly up and down the room, the thin nostrils of his aquiline nose seemed to dilate in a way that might have denoted sensibility had not this suggestion been belied by the cold craftiness of his eye, which was again inconsistent with the soft sensuality of his handsome mouth.

Gradually his face cleared. After all, that he should have married a woman almost twice his age, was a sacrifice necessitated by the inconsiderate conduct of a paternal ancestor in France whose title, Baron d'Holbret, he had inherited, but with it, unfortunately, very little financial emolument. The title had not tempted American heiresses, several of whom had shown a decided callousness to his charms. He had arranged the preliminaries to his marriage with much care. Only once had he repented its consummation, and now an inscrutable fate had placed within his own home Marjorie Wyngate in the capacity of secretary of his wife.

In marrying an elderly woman, d'Holbret had taken into consideration her large fortune alone; her strong character, combined with a closeness in money matters that almost amounted to miserliness, he had not fully understood. This latter characteristic was peculiarly objectionable to him and he resorted to extraordinary means to overcome it. He had succeeded beyond his hopes, and began his married life by wiping out his debts and with them he hoped to wipe out many other things. Now he was confronted by a problem more difficult than any he had solved.

With an effort to dismiss the subject from his

mind, he leaned forward slightly, and saw Marjorie Wyngate appear through the front door. He sat watching her unconscious grace as she raised her sunshade and passed swiftly from sight. Rising nervously, he took from his waistcoat pocket a silver matchsafe and relit his cigar, pacing the floor with rapid steps as he continued to smoke.

In the meantime, Marjorie, unaware of eyes bent upon her, was on her way to visit Mr. Bonnycastle, who had just returned to his home from the Orient. She had wished Rand and Mammy to accompany her, but poor old Mammy, for the first time in her life, was hard at work assisting in the laundry work for her "board and keep," and Rand she had found in the yard, decidedly opposed to paying a visit, since he was engaged in personating a hen, his small figure almost hidden from sight in the folds of a waterproof cape, within which a motherless chick cuddled, under the impression that it had refuge beneath the maternal wings. In the rear, a tall shanghai rooster, with one leg in a splint, hopped solemnly along, occasionally stopping to crow lustily.

Marjorie started, therefore, alone and walking quickly along a short stretch of country road, she reached a heavy iron gate capped with stone acorns, which led into the grove which surrounded "Robin's Roost." Here she stood for a few minutes looking up and down the long white stretches of turnpike, the fields of ripening grain and the distant hills. Marjorie's thoughts were not upon the landscape, however, she was thinking of the visit she was going to make. She had not seen Mr. Bonnycastle since her childhood. He could not have been very young even then, for his hair had been white, though of course he was many years younger than her grandmother, with

whom on summer evenings he frequently took tea in the flower-covered arbor, and seated together, Marjorie remembered what a beautiful couple she had thought them.

One occasion especially impressed itself upon her mind: the two, Mr. Bonnycastle and her grandmother, were talking together very earnestly, when her grandmother's beautiful eyes brimmed with tears, and he had leaned over and kissed her hands very tenderly. Soon after this, Mr. Bonnycastle went away, and her grandmother had spoken of his goodness that had made him come to be regarded as a saint, and that he was also a genius, and expended most of the large fortune he had made, in works of philanthropy.

From time to time, in the years that followed, strange stories came back from the far East of the, what seemed, supernatural powers Mr. Bonnycastle had developed. These stories filled the minds of the simple country folks with wonder.

Now, after many years, he had returned and in a few minutes she would see him. With a quickening of the pulse, and a sudden sense of timidity, she walked in the "dim cool aisles" beneath the giant oaks. The air seemed alive with the song of birds —the harsh call of the catbird, ending in a burst of song, the "to whitch to whee" of a ground robin, as, startled, it flew up from the ground. From a thicket she heard the plaintive note of a mourning dove, and between the branches of the trees there frequently came a flash of blue, as a blue jay with harsh screams and unmusical calls seemed to try to drown the notes of the sweet voiced singers.

Drawing near the large red brick house, a demonstrative collie rushed toward her with so tumult-

uous a welcome that she found it difficult to ascend the stone steps that led up to the door. Here she stood for a moment examining the knocker—a dragon's head—before she raised the heavy ring that hung from the dragon's mouth.

CHAPTER VI

In response to her knock, a comely Scotch woman opened the door, and she was ushered into a circular hall, wainscotted in English oak. The broad polished stairway was lighted by a skylight in the roof, and with windows of stained glass on the landings. On each side of the hall she noticed that there was an arched doorway.

"May I see Mr. Bonnycastle?" Marjorie asked.

"I'll take in ye're name, Ma'am," the woman replied pleasantly. She had walked off a short distance, when turning, she regarded Marjorie with sudden anxiety.

"Be ye married, lady?" she asked abruptly. She put so much solicitude into this extraordinary question that Marjorie looked at her too much astonished to speak.

"I have been married, but I am a widow now," she managed to say at last. As her words died away, from somewhere, she could not tell where, there came to her a faint whisper like a wordless chant or prayer, or the stirring of wings. Marjorie looked about her to determine from what source the unexpected sound had proceeded.

"Did you speak?" she called soft'y to Janet.

"No, lady!" was the gentle reply, as the woman turned startled eyes upon her.

At this moment, through one of the arched doorways, Mr. Bonnycastle came toward her. Though she knew that threescore years and ten had passed over his head, yet save the snowy locks that fell

upon his shoulders, there was nothing to indicate age in the gentleman who welcomed her so cordially, holding her hands warmly within his own—such beautiful hands, Marjorie noticed that his were, slender and tapering, the hands of an artist an idealist!

"I hoped you would come, Marjorie, and knew you would before long. But where is your little boy?"

There was something so cordial, so caressing in his tone, that Marjorie felt at home at once, and laughingly explained how she had left Rand, caring for a disabled rooster and an orphan chick. She promised that he should come another time.

Mr. Bonnycastle smiled in sympathy with her narration. "Come!" he said, raising from the low divan on which they had taken their seats, "Let us go to my innermost recess, my *sanctum santorum,* where we can talk better. Will you come?"

Passing through one of the arched doorways, they entered a short corridor which led to a brightly lighted room. Glancing about her, Marjorie noticed the many books that lined the walls, the rugs on the polished floor, the large table piled with magazines, papers, pipes and tobacco, the latter for the use of his friends, for Mr. Bonnycastle did not smoke. Around the table comfortable chairs were drawn up invitingly. In one of these Mr. Bonnycastle placed Marjorie, with a stool at her feet.

"I knew you from your likeness to your mother," he said, with a charming smile; "you look more like her than you did as a little girl." Involuntarily he glanced toward a niche in the wall hidden by a curtain. "She was beautiful and gifted, with a genius that obliged her to follow the bent of her

own mind; so she went on the stage. This was very differently regarded at that time. The world has progressed—in a way," he continued thoughtfully. "A hundred or so years ago, Dr. Samuel Johnson said that it did not do for a woman to be a portrait painter, because 'it would be highly improper for her to look into a male's face. "Now!" A whimsical expression came into Mr. Bonnycastle's eyes, and he shrugged his shoulders with a smile.

"Before we speak of anything else, Marjorie—I may call you by that familiar name?—you must have been astonished at the unusual question asked you by the woman, Janet Markham, at the door?"

Marjorie replied in the affirmative.

"That is the results of the strange conditions attending my inheritance of my uncle's property, which have been misrepresented. He was, as you probably know, an eccentric bachelor, disappointed in the love of his life, and by his will left me 'Robin's Roost,' with all his other possessions. The stipulations were that I was to live in the house a part of each year, to remain unmarried, and the property was to be entailed upon the next of kin unmarried. My nephew, Decimus Clay, is now my heir. He is the last male of kin, and the will makes a serious provision in this case. Another stipulation of this strange document is to the effect that no married woman, other than the mother or sister of the owner, should ever be entertained as a guest within these doors."

"I never heard of so unnatural a will!" exclaimed Marjorie impulsively. "How could anyone be expected to follow out such conditions?"

"I gave my word to my uncle, Marjorie; this meant much more to me than the provisions of his

will. Beside," Mr. Bonnycastle flushed slightly, "I had no temptation to do otherwise, for she whom alone I would have married, in the only real marriage, that of communion of spirit, passed from the earth before my uncle's death."

"And you have been alone all these years?" Marjorie asked, the thought of his loneliness bringing sudden tears to her eyes.

"No," Mr. Bonnycastle replied serenely, "I am not alone, for she is often with me, and at times I have been permitted to go to her."

Except that his beautiful voice seemed to grow more tender, he might have been speaking of some every day occurrence. "Most frequently, however, she has come to me, and that," he smiled, "is my happiness! Not many days ago, a child, now grown into a woman, whom she loved, brought me a basket of flowers and as we talked of my beloved, I felt, I knew that she stood near me. You do not understand, Marjorie," he went on, "but some day you will. Each of our senses may be conceived of as striving toward development of a wider kind than earthly experience has as yet allowed. The evidence for communion with the departed is in my personal experience as strong as that for telepathic communication between the living, and of that, you know, there can be no doubt."

"If only the whole world could possess this knowledge!" Marjorie exclaimed.

"The whole world will possess it," Mr. Bonnycastle said quickly. "The hour has come, and since the first carrier pigeon has swooped down into this fastness of beleaguered men, the ear of the world has been turned to it, the heart of the world is open awaiting the revelations so near at hand."

"It would be a great happiness to me," Marjorie

said, opening suddenly her gray eyes, that long and narrow, seldom opened wide except when she was deeply stirred, and then gave a glimpse of her soul. "I would often be very lonely if it were not for Rand. When a woman has a child," the faint smile on her lips deepened into a glow of happiness, "she no longer lives in the same world that she has lived in before. Her heart expands until it reaches out to everything in nature that is young, and tender, and helpless."

"The young as well as the old are very near the borders of another land," Mr. Bonnycastle replied. "The Master's tenderest words were called forth by children. He himself became 'one of these little ones,' and lay in the lowly manger with his blessed Mother, whose ear is now open to their faintest cry."

For several moments there was silence, broken by the entrance of Janet with the tea service. After some conversation of a lighter nature, Mr. Bonnycastle asked with slight hesitation, "What have you heard lately from your husband's mother, Marjorie?"

"Nothing, for some time," replied Marjorie, flushing a little; then she continued almost with resentment, "I have never seen Mrs. Wyngate, and I never shall!"

"I must tell you something of your childhood," Mr. Bonnycastle said brightly, changing the subject. "Before doing so, however, allow me," he took from Marjorie's hand a delicate sevres cup from which she had been drinking the fragrant tea. "I saw you twice then. The first time you were playing in a garden with Decimus Clay. The next time——" Mr. Bonnycastle laughed, and there was that suggestion of youth in his face that Marjorie

had at first noticed. "Each Sunday your grandmother was driven in a closed carriage into the village to church. On this particular Sunday she was indisposed. She was very small, and you were tall for your age, so without anyone suspecting it you slipped on her bonnet and long black veil, and the broche shawl that she was in the habit of wearing, and took your seat in the carriage. It was not until you reached the church and had been solemnly escorted up the aisle by one of the vestrymen, that you threw back your veil and showed to the astounded members of the congregation a small impudent face peering out at them through a pair of large spectacles. If I remember rightly, the services were brought to an abrupt conclusion."

"I fear that I was a very naughty girl," Marjorie said, laughing, "and that this proneness to error has followed me through life! Think what disgrace I am in now with Madame d'Holbret for having absented myself so long! It has been delightful sitting here with you, and I lost all count of——," as she spoke, a crsytal clock in the room struck, and through the open door from every room in the house there came silvery chimes.

"You will come and see me again, soon? I have something that I wish to show you," Mr. Bonnycastle said, as Marjorie rose to leave.

"Just as soon as you will let me, and I can escape from Madame d'Holbret. You must see Rand!"

After Mr. Bonnycastle had watched Marjorie from his front steps until she was out of sight, he came slowly back to the house and into the room in which they had been seated. Drawing aside a curtain from a niche in the wall, he gazed with rapt

eyes upon a portrait—that of a beautiful girl in her first youth.

As he continued to gaze upon this picture, a strange transformation gradually passed over Mr. Bonnycastle. Falling back into a chair, his face, over which at first there had stolen a deathly pallor, became radiant. The soul in the eyes of the young girl looked into his own soul, and a white rose that she held in her hand fell at his feet, as she beckoned him—beyond! to the land of Love Immortal. There was a knock at the door, and Janet Markham, coming softly into the room, removed the tray that stood upon the table. Turning to speak to Mr. Bonnycastle, she paused, startled, then hastening to his side lifted his hand, which fell lifeless in her own. With an exclamation, she touched a silver bell, and her husband, a brawny Scotchman, with a fine grave face, came into the room.

"I misdoot it's farewell, this time, Andrew!" she said in a broken voice.

"Na, na," the Scotchman said, as together they tenderly laid Mr. Bonnycastle upon a couch. "See hoo gently he breathes, he willna be awa' long."

CHAPTER VII

Returning, Marjorie had walked quickly through the grove and over the short stretch of turnpike that led to the "Shelter" before she realized the lateness of the hour. The stars shone through scurrying clouds, and suddenly becoming aware of the oppressive heat, she walked more slowly.

The visit to Mr. Bonnycastle had made a deep impression upon her mind. The loneliness and uncertainty of which she had spoken to him had given way to a quiet confidence in his friendship and protection, which she was sure would be extended equally to Rand and herself. Strange as his words had been, the manner in which they were spoken gave them the force of truth, and as she listened, to Marjorie had come the feeling of humility that one experiences in the presence of a spiritual superior.

At a distance she saw Rand's little figure flitting in and out among the trees in pursuit of a lightning bug. He had always shown a passion for light, and this little insect, with its lamp that has baffled the minds of the most eminent scientists, was to him a source of constant delight.

Having secured his prize, he ran with it clasped closely in his hand toward his mother, covering her face with such ardent kisses that it brought a smile to the lips of Baron d'Holbret, who, in a cloud of tobaico smoke, watched them from the gallery.

Near by, Madame d'Holbret reclined on a couch,

while Miss Araminta, pale and exhausted looking, fanned her with a palmetto fan.

"See what a beautiful light it makes." said Rand, "it is shining just as hard as it can all the time."

As he cautiously opened his hand to show his treasure to his mother, the little winged creature, after poising a moment, flew upward and was soon lost to sight among the trees.

"Never mind, Rand," said Marjorie, tenderly. "It has gone to give light somewhere else, I suppose."

"It makes me think of what the minister says in church at the collection, you know, 'Let your light so shine before men,' replied the child, "but that couldn't mean lightning bugs, could it?"

Marjorie struggled hard to maintain her composure, but Baron d'Holbret began to laugh.

"It would be delightful if all of us could realize fully what we were meant to do, so that our 'light might shine before men,'" murmured the Baron, who had a disconcerting way of seeing and hearing all that went on around him, whether it was intended to reach him or not.

"I think that the rain is near," Madame d'Holbret remarked, stirring uneasily.

"The lights in heaven are all going out. Has God gone to bed?" Rand asked, in an awestruck whisper.

"Little *boys* should be in bed at all events!" Madame d'Holbret said sharply, rising from her couch, for heavy drops of rain were now beginning to fall. As she spoke, there was something in her expression as inscrutable as the darkness, and that might have belied the sharpness of her words.

Miss Araminta wearily collected the books and papers from which she had been reading to her em-

ployer earlier in the afternoon. Then observing that Madame d'Holbret was some distance in advance of her, she quickly gathered up shawls and cushions, and walked rapidly to the house. Several times Marjorie had attempted to help her, but she only shook her head, and smiled faintly. As she proceeded, with some awkwardness, it must be confessed, she dropped a portion of her load, which Rand energetically assisted her to re-adjust, offering politely to carry it all.

Baron d'Holbret, who had been an amused spectator of this little scene, again laughed at the difficulties of Miss Araminta, and his mirth increased when she hurried off like a frightened rabbit as the voice of Madame was heard, calling her with some impatience.

"How charming a virtue is meekness!" he commented, with a slight sneer. "But Miss Araminta should never hurry. Haste does not become her."

"She is good and lovely," replied Marjorie, her eyes flashing. "And meekness is a rare quality, which I, for one, do not possess."

"That is easily seen," said the Baron, smiling covertly in the darkness.

Marjorie made no answer, but she felt her color rise hotly.

"Come, Rand," she said, controlling herself, and smiling down into his eager young face, "It is time for little boys to be asleep."

After Rand had gone upstairs that night he lay awake in his little white bed near his mother's listening to the rain pattering upon the roof and the wind moaning through the great-trees. At last he crept into his mother's bed, and snuggled his warm little body close to hers. "As God walks about the world, is the lightning His lantern?" he asked.

CHAPTER VIII

Above the wing in which Marjorie and Rand slept, and which was somewhat remote from the rest of the house, an oak tree spread its branches, and frequently they were awakened in the morning by squirrels dropping down across or scampering over the roof. It was Rand's delight in the early morning to count the acorns in an undertone, or to hold conversations with the noisy squirrels in order to amuse himself when he awakened too early to get up. He never found himself at a loss for entertainment of some sort, and did not require to be amused.

He had soon gone to sleep after the storm of the preceding night, but he now lay for what seemed hours listening to the wind as it gradually died away. "It sounds so lonely," he thought, "like a person that hasn't any home." He must have gone to sleep again in a little while, for when he next opened his eyes, Mammy, who made some pretense every morning so that she might look in on the little boy, had come upstairs to search for a missing article from the week's wash.

Rand waved his hand at her, and called out: "Good morning, Mammy," but he had quickly become engrossed in some childish game and was not quite ready to get up yet. There were many things at the Shelter that were entirely new to him, and had given him much food for reflection. Of one thing he was sure, he did not like Madame d'Holbret's husband.

"Betta get up from thar, lil' boy," said Mammy, in her soft throaty voice, "Thar is something waiting for you out in the gyarden."

Before a question could be asked, Mammy's head quickly disappeared from the door, and Rand, opening his eyes, saw that the sun was shining brightly into the room. He lay still for several minutes wondering about the storm, and then sprang up quickly and began to dress himself. Standing on tiptoe his head reached to the top of the old mahogany dresser, but he could only see a front lock of hair, upon which he bestowed all his attention. When he had completed his toilette he ran down the steps, past the magnolia tree, where the old peacock walked in solitary state trailing his emerald and bronze tail. Rand paid no attention to him but hurried on to the garden where the sunlight was shining through the red silk cups of the poppies, until it hurt his eyes and he looked away over to the green of the trees.

When he drew near to the fountain, he ran faster, for he felt sure that there he would find the treasure that Mammy had intimated awaited him in the garden.

The fountain was his favorite place to play. No longer, however, a glittering spray of water rose up in the air and then rained down again with a cool splash against the basin. This was filled by an underground pipe, and in the center of the fountain, where a Satyr had once stood, holding up a drinking cup from which the spray ascended, there was now only a flat, bare stone.

A few days after her arrival at the "Shelter," when Mammy had come out to the fountain with Rand, she had sighed heavily, and Rand, in deference to Mammy's feelings, had sighed also. There

was evidently some mystery about the disappearance of this "monument to Satire," as Mammy called it. Rand thought of it a great deal, wondering if his great grandmother had sold it before Madame d'Holbret bought the "Shelter."

He climbed over now on a plank bridge that he had made to the stone upon which the Satyr had once rested, and sat watching the water until he noticed that its surface was disturbed. Something alive was floating on it. A turtle! He felt sure that was what Mammy had meant for him to come out to see. Two or three times the turtle climbed upon the stone on which he sat, and he tried to help it to reach the surface, but each time it slipped back into the water. When at last he was tired of playing with it, he strolled over to the sun dial to see if he could tell the time by its long, shadow finger. As Rand stood here, he saw walking toward him down the garden walk, a gentleman whom he recognized as the "husband of Madame d'Holbret," for by no other title, so far, had the new master of the "Shelter" been recognized by its inmates.

The Baron d'Holbret did not see Rand until he drew quite near, and then, stopping suddenly, they both stood looking at each other

"Are you a gentleman?" Rand asked, with great politeness, feeling that it was incumbent upon him to break the awkward silence.

"What an odd little chap!" The Baron put up his pincenez and regarded Rand more closely.

"I am very tall!" Rand replied, drawing himself up.

"But what made you ask such a question?" His interlocutor said, laughing.

"My mother says that a gentleman never laughs

at a lady. Miss Araminta is a lady. My mother . . . here she comes now!"

Marjorie had come through the gate. and was walking rapidly toward them. Dressed in white, her cheeks slightly flushed, and her pretty hair blowing in soft tendrils about her face, she looked very fair and sweet.

Only noticing Rand at first, she now bowed slightly to his companion.

"I am just enjoying a talk with your little son," the Baron said, with an ingratiating smile.

Marjorie bowed again, unsmilingly, and the Baron, glancing lightly at her. continued: "A pleasure that in your own society you have denied me. Will you think it presumption for me to say that I thought your abrupt departure from my wife's room, on the day of my arrival here, very unkind?"

"Not at all, it seemed unnecessary for me to remain. I am the secretary of your wife, Baron d'Holbret."

"So the Baroness informs me. I hope that you will find the occupation congenial. I should infer —if you will pardon me again for a personality— that an occupation is a novel experience for you."

"Do I give the impression of being so idle a person?" Marjorie smiled for the first time. "In reality," she spoke impulsively, "I felt willing to make almost any sacrifice to bring my boy to this old home where I spent my own happy childhood."

"And this was your old home?" To Marjorie's surprise the Baron looked disconcerted, and then stooping, he restored a rose that had fallen from Marjorie's hand to the garden walk. As he gave her the flower he looked intently at her as if trying to read her thoughts.

Marjorie returned his gaze, unfeigned astonishment in her eyes; his expression caused her to shiver, as with sudden chill. Then inclined to laugh at herself for this sensation, suggested doubtless by her imagination, she turned from him. "The garden is not what it once was," she said, with a nod of farewell, "It is still beautiful, however. I hope that you may enjoy it." Clasping Rand's hand in her own, they moved away, and walked to a more remote part of the garden where they took their seats upon a rustic bench.

From the hives along the garden wall there came a low murmuring sound from the bees. Twice a jeweled-neck humming bird flitted by. Marjorie took no note of these things. She was both indignant and bewildered, and regardless of Rand's questions, sat absorbed in thought. Why should Madame, with so scrutinizing a glance, have questioned her in regard to a relation who bore a name similar to her own, and who also married a Wyngate? Certainly her family connections could in no way bear upon the work that she was expected to do for this elderly lady, who, to her surprise, she had found married to a young and attractive man. And now, the Baron d'Holbret, her employer's husband. had questioned her somewhat oddly, she thought, though this might have been her fancy. While she seemed to have some vague memory in connection with him, certainly it did not justify his having sought her or having thought of her again. With an effort to dismiss the subject from her mind, she turned, smiling,to Rand, and unfolding a small parcel that for sometime had been exciting his interest, she disclosed slices of bread and butter, stuck together with a liberal supply of jam.

"Good little Mama!" Rand said, patting her cheek.

"I think it was good Mammy this time; it was she who managed to get it for you. Since the Baron has come, you know, our famine has been followed by a feast."

For several minutes they sat in silence, and then Rand sprang up with an exclamation. "See the big ant running over my bread! It acts as if it were crazy."

"Yes, it is crazy, Rand," Marjorie replied absently. "All ants that belong to this family literally 'lose their heads.'" And then, following out her own scheme for Rand's entertainment and education, and knowing perfectly well that the child had called her attention to the ant for the story he might hear of it, she drew him down beside her and began:

"There is a little fly in the world called the a-po-ceph-elus, that, following its curious instinct, pursues the ant until it succeeds at last in laying its egg on the ant's neck. When the egg hatches out, the maggot gradually eats the ant's brain, while its poor victim, crazy with pain, runs about striking its head just as you see it doing now, until at last the head drops off, and the wretched little fly looks out for the first time at the world. Oh! she exclaimed, suddenly looking up, "something must have happened at the house. See, there is Mammy!"

Coming down the garden walk they saw Mammy's turbaned head, bobbing like a big red poppy, as she almost ran toward them.

CHAPTER IX

On reaching the house, Marjorie found that Madame d'Holbret, who was slightly lame, had fallen while coming down the steps that led from the side entrance of the house into the garden. A servant had been dispatched for a physician and a nurse. When the doctor arrived, Marjorie was surprised to recognize in him a plump genial looking little gentleman whom she had several times encountered on her walks to and from the postoffice.

The Baron d'Holbret, who had stood by his wife's bedside counting, with apparent anxiety, her pulse beats and administering a restorative, walked with the doctor to the end of the hall, and then returned to the side of his wife.

"I can assure you," Doctor Pell said emphatically, looking at Marjorie, "the Baroness is not in the least danger, if she were I would tell——"

"Oh, no. not me!" Marjorie replied hastily. "You would tell Baron d'Holbret."

"I see. I would tell my patient's son—a thousand pardons. her husband, the mistake is a natural one—that his mo—— ahem, his wife will be up in ten days at most. In the meantime, she is likely to be feverish, and slightly delirious at times, and for this symptom I leave a powder."

The nurse held out her hand for the prescription, but the doctor apparently did not see.

"There are times, Miss, ah, excuse me—Madam," he said gloomily, handing the powder to Marjorie, "when I feel a hesitation in giving another pre-

scription. I am convinced by my conscience of having summarily having cut off from eternity so many of my fellow beings, and keeping them groping in darkness here, when they might have ascended to something better. It is true, one must take into consideration," he went on solemnly, "the direction one's patients, in case of dissolution, would be likely to take; and this being so, naturally we can take no chances. For myself," Doctor Pell bowed gallantly to Marjorie, and sighed so deeply that his round, red face grew redder, "there are times when I feel that I have found heaven here upon earth. They are rare, though very rare."

"We are told that heaven lies within us," Marjorie replied gravely, biting her lips to keep from smiling.

The little doctor was evidently a character, and not so superficial as he seemed, for all the time that he was talking to Marjorie in an undertone, in this absurd way, she noticed how closely his keen eyes watched the Baron d'Holbret, as he stood by his wife's bedside. His trim figure and beaming face were soon out of sight, and summoned by the nurse to take her place for a few moments, Marjorie went into the darkened room where the invalid lay with closed eyes on the great teestered bedstead that brought back so many memories of Marjorie's childhood.

She thought of the day when she had climbed up on it, and it had gone down with a crash, and of the cold winter nights, when she had crept into her grandmother's room, and having climbed up the steps, had sunk down beside her in a nest of downy warmth. It was not these memories, however, but the face upon the pillow, the proud face, made more ghastly by the fresh scarlet hangings, but

beautiful now that the scar was hidden, and made almost gentle by suffering—it was this that touched some inmost chord in her memory. This shadowy recollection, she felt in a vague way, had to do with a period when life had held a deeper meaning for her than when she had "played lady;" a child playing upon the stage before the curtain was rolled up for the drama in which she was to take part.

Madame d'Holbret suddenly opened her eyes, and the Baron, who stood not far off. hastened to her, arranging her pillows as she tossed from side to side, already feverish, as the doctor had expected, and muttering to herself continually. Taking one of her hands gently within his own, he stroked it with a motion that evidently held some hypnotic property, for it quickly brought sleep. She slept until there was a timid knock at the door.

"Araminta!" Madame d'Holbret exclaimed, a grim smile upon her face. "Tell her, Francis, tell them all that not a bone has been broken in their cousin Charlotte's body, that she may be confined to her bed, and her wits wander for a few days, but that it will be years before they receive——" Her words trailed off. In her eyes there had come a cunning expression, and she laughed; while the Baron, leaning nearer to her, laughed also.

"Do you know," she said, falling back upon her pillow, the feverish gleam returning to her eyes, "that my son has come back? He is a little boy. I watch him when he does not see me, playing in the garden. There is no one but the shadow, who always came between us, to care for him now."

"Your son was a grown man, and he is dead, and

cannot return to you," the Baron said, firmly.

"Do you mean to contradict me?" There was an imperious ring in his wife's voice, and she made an effort to rise to her feet. "I married you to care for the inheritance that was to come to my sons' son, and you are spending it all and tell me that he is dead. I tell you, Francis, my son is alive and he must come into his own. Part of it I deposited."

"Yes, where did you deposit it?" her husband said eagerly, bending down close to the sick woman.

Madame d'Holbret pressed her hand to her forehead, but she could not remember, and the Baron, rising to his feet, walked to the window, wiping large beads of perspiration from his pale face. He stood, with his back turned, until the invalid, apparently coming back to her senses. complained that she could not sleep, when taking his seat again, he passed his hands before her eyes into which there gradually came a dazed expression, succeeded by unconsciousness.

It was not until she had fallen into this profound sleep that he looked toward Marjorie. and then, glancing toward the sleeper, significantly touched his forehead. "She may be rational when she wakes," he said, "and until the nurse comes in, I shall remain with her."

Acting upon this suggestion, Marjorie, who sat in the shadow, afraid, by word or sign to make her presence known, rose and stole softly from the room.

She found the household already somewhat demoralized, eating an early dinner, and indulging in unusual merriment. On the back gallery Mammy sat nodding in the sunshine, while Rand lay near,

his head resting upon one arm, the other clasping closely to him a small black puppy that he had found upon the roadside and taken to his heart.

Along one side of the gallery, extending the entire length of the house, there was a low bench, and Marjorie took her seat on this, thinking deeply. It seemed that Miss Araminta was a cousin of her employer, and that she had other relations who had expected to share property at her death that was all to go to the Baron d'Holbret. And yet—Madame had a son. Where was he? Struggling somewhere alone, while this man, who had married his mother, usurped his place? Or, was he the little boy of whom Rand reminded Madame, who, it might be, had died when a child?

To Marjorie's ears there came the faint swish of a scythe as the grass was cut upon the lawn. Near by, a hen invited her downy progeny, with loud clucking, to partake of a worm. From these things her eyes wandered to the green of the trees. The face of nature was as irresponsive to her question, however, as the Fate that we so often question, and would gladly escape.

CHAPTER X

"But, dearest, only girls don't keep things in their pockets!"

Not heeding Rand's indignant protest, Marjorie was gravely divesting his pockets of a strange variety of objects: tops and marbles, bits of string, a head moulded of mud, and greatest treasure of all, a box containing a tiny tooth, the first he had lost, carefully wrapped up in one of her prettiest handkerchiefs.

She had said to Mr. Bonnycastle that he must see Rand, and now a favorable opportunity had presented itself. Mammy, who rarely found it possible to escape from her ironing table, had been peremptorily summoned by Baron d'Holbret and entrusted with a package of important papers, to be safely deposited in the village post-office. To perform this errand, she would have to pass "Robin's Roost," and Marjorie had determined to send Rand with her in fulfillment of her promise.

Rand's toilet had ended with the act of vandalism above related, and now he stood, bright and shining, in his best linen suit, while Marjorie viewed him from all sides, at intervals giving him a kiss, or adding another touch to the large bow tied under his sailor collar.

"You had better leave Rand at 'Robin's Roost,' Mammy," said Marjorie, "and call for him on your way back. Baron d'Holbret might think it strange if you staid too long."

The old woman's face fell. "Ain't I goin' to see

Marse Robin Bonnycastle, Miss Marjorie?" she asked, in a disappointed tone.

"Of course you are, Mammy," replied Marjorie laughing, "and I know he will be glad to see you after all these years."

When Rand and Mammy had started on their way, she stood at the window, watching them across the sunlit lawn, Rand waving his cap with one hand, the other closely clasped by Mammy, who held her head high, her ample, well-starched skirts making a faint rustling noise highly gratifying to her, as she stepped briskly along.

When they had passed through the iron gate, and were out of sight, Marjorie looked up into the sky, blue and flecked with tiny flakes of white. Her eyes rested here a moment, and then they came nearer to the earth and sought the garden, vivid with glowing color, from which a faint breath of air wafted a delicious aromatic fragrance.

In reality, Marjorie's eyes rested upon these familiar surroundings with unseeing vision. She was looking into the garden of her soul, wherein bloomed an exquisite flower, purest white, with heart of gold. Of all the flowers in the garden, she knew that this alone would not perish, for it was *maternal love.*

Rand and Mammy were soon standing before Mr. Bonnycastle's front door.

"I want to go in alone, Mammy," said Rand, with childish dignity.

"Bress your heart, run right along," cried Mammy, with immense pride, as he slowly mounted the steps, feeling very important. He stood on tiptoe, and with a tremendous effort reached up to the large brass ring that hung from the dragon's mouth. Although his knock was a faint one, the

reverberation had hardly died away when Janet Markham opened the door, and nodding pleasantly to Mammy, joyfully ushered Rand into the hall. He followed her through a long corridor, closed with glass in winter, but forming now a shaded walk, with beautiful trees meeting in an arch overhead. This led to a retreat in which Mr. Bonnycastle usually spent his morning hours.

The room that they entered was really not a room, but a circular court. The walls, built high, were lined with bark from the white birch, and were of the softest tone imaginable, and in the long windows, through which one caught glimpses of the lawn, were masses of orchids, and other blooming plants. The roof, now open to the sky, was formed by the spreading branches of a magnificent tree, that rose from the center of the tesselated marble floor.

Mr. Bonnycastle sat upon a rustic seat, the sunshine that fell across his chair giving his face and snowy locks an effect almost dazzling. He was coaxing one of the many bright-colored birds that flew about him to his finger, and was so absorbed that he did not hear footsteps, but looked up suddenly to see a little boy standing beside him, regarding him with grave interest.

"Rand!" Mr. Bonnycastle exclaimed brightly, rising quickly to his feet, "I am very glad to see you."

"How did you know my name?" inquired Rand, in astonishment.

"I think because you look so like your mother," replied Mr. Bonnycastle. "I hope she is quite well."

Janet Markham had brought in a small chair for

Rand, which Mr. Bonnycastle now drew close to his side.

"Yes, she is well," said Rand, as he sat down, "and she sent you a message. She said she is coming to see you soon, and the rooster with his leg in a splint is getting better."

"Poor old fellow, he will be glad to walk like the other roosters again," answered Mr. Bonnycastle, with due gravity.

"My mother says," Rand went on, "that you knew her when she was a little girl. You must be very ol——"

He suddenly remembered that his mother had told him it was not polite to talk about people's ages, and that to ladies, especially, this was a disagreeable subject. Mr. Bonnycastle was not a lady, but he might be sensitive. Rand felt badly until he was reassured by Mr. Bonnycastle's hearty laugh.

"You thought I must be very old? Why, Rand, I am not old at all. Sometimes I feel that I am still a little boy like you."

As Rand was pondering this surprising assertion, a green paroquet that had been perching on his finger flew up, and to the child's delight, found a resting place on his shoulder.

"Did you ever hear of Peter Pan, Rand, the little boy that would not grow up?"

"Did he have a mother?" Rand inquired at once.

"Yes, I am sure that he did, for I remember that when he would have returned to her at night, it was lock-out time, and he could not get back."

"He should have grown up so that he could take care of his mother," Rand said thoughtfully, his head now very near to Mr. Bonnycastle's shoulder.

"That is what I am trying to do, to grow into a man, so I can take care of *my* mother. You see," Rand raised innocent eyes to his companion's face, "*we are not* at all *anxious* to *marry*."

Rand's tone was so exactly like Marjorie's as he had made his unexpected statement that Mr. Bonnycastle would have laughed had he not felt the small hand slipped confidingly into his own. Realizing that this was a moment that might make or mar a friendship, he did not smile.

"Your mother and yourself might not like the same person, you know."

"Oh, we always think alike!" the child replied confidently. "We should be sorry, though, if we had to do like Danny, who used to wait on Mrs. Clay's table, you know? He is paralyzed, and he said he had to marry a strong-armed lady, who could take in washing, and take care of him."

"You think your mother might not find such a marriage congenial?" Mr. Bonnycastle suggested, with a slight twinkle in his eye.

Rand nodded his head in reply. He felt that he was understood. "Mrs. Clay says that I am to fight my mother's battles. I knew that before, though," with an air of determination. "A person can't do anything well unless they practice, you know," Rands' tone was becoming a little doubtful, "and Uncle Danny has a boy not much larger than I am. He provokes me so, I get very angry and my mother says, it isn't much worse to fight than to think hard thoughts."

"She is right, Rand!" Mr. Bonnycastle replied quickly, looking into the clear, intelligent eyes of the little boy and feeling sure that he would understand. Our thoughts are our real companions and we must be very careful how we choose them. We

can make of our minds an inner court, where we receive royal personages. I mean noble and beautiful thoughts, or else by thinking mean, false or cruel things, descend into a base and low strata of society."

"I think I hear Mammy coming along the corridor," Rand exclaimed, after a few minutes of thoughtful silence.

Mr. Bonnycastle looked up to see an old colored woman bowing in the doorway, until her turbaned head almost touched the floor.

"You are looking well, Mammy," he said kindly. "It is many years since I have seen you, and yet you have changed very little."

Mammy's eyes kindled.

"Thankee kindly, Marse Robin Bonnycastle, I shorely is well, 'ceptin' for a kind o' misery in my haid. No, sir, I ain' change, mebbe, but mos' everythin 'else at the 'Shelter' has, I reckon."

"It's not much like the old days there, is it?" said Mr. Bonnycastle, sympathetically.

"No, sir. it sure am not! Marse Robin." Mammy was evidently excited about something "just now I carried some papers down to the post-office for the madam, and the man said he would send them as second-class mail. 'No, sir,' I tole him, 'I won't have no second-class mail go out'n a house whar my ole mistis, Mrs. Randolph, usetr live. But dat man just laffed at me and done took the package!"

"Never mind, Mammy, they will go quickly," was the reassuring reply. "He meant that they would not need so many stamps as letters, that's all."

"Why didn't he say so, then?" said Mammy, still

indignant over the supposed slight to "the family." "Pore white trash don't know nothin'."

The green paroquet had flown to the other end of the court, and Rand hurried away in pursuit of it.

"Marse Robin," said Mammy, in a hoarse whisper, and in her small bright eyes fixed on his face there was an expression of keen inquiry, "Do you know that foreigner that is married to the Madame?"

"No, Mammy, I have never met him."

"I know him right enuf!" Mammy nodded her head impressively, "He done cunjur dat Madam," she paused, and an anxious expression came into her wrinkled countenance. "He couldn' cunjur Miss Marjorie, could he, Marse Robin?" she asked eagerly.

"No, Mammy, he will never do that," said Mr. Bonnycastle, with emphasis.

"Jus' the same, she get cold every time he come near her," declared Mammy obstinately. "There's sumpin' creepy about dat man. I never *has* liked him."

Mr. Bonnycastle was more interested than he cared to show, but asked no questions, for Rand was now standing beside him, the paroquet balancing on his shoulder.

"I have had a very nice visit, but I expect we will have to go now," said the little boy politely.

"Present my compliments to your mother, Rand, and tell her I have enjoyed seeing you very much," Mr. Bonnycastle's tone could not have been more ceremonious, if he had been addressing royalty.

Then turning to Mammy, he said in a kindly way: "Don't worry, Mammy, Miss Marjorie will

always be protected. Rand here will tell you that, won't you, my boy?"

Stooping, he kissed the child on his broad forehead, as if moved by a sudden impulse of deep affection.

Mammy looked up earnestly into his face. "Seems like when folks come roun' where you is day feels better, Marse Robin," she said gratefully.

Mr. Bonnycastle looked at her without speaking, and then his face suddenly lighted with a radiant smile.

Mammy courtesied low, and followed Rand to the door. As they left the house, they saw Mr. Bonnycastle at the window, smiling and waving at them, just as Marjorie had done a short time before.

CHAPTER XI

Perfect quiet prevailed at the "Shelter." The midday sun scintilated through the green leaves of the trees, and in the garden wilted the flowers into languor with its burning kiss.

Only near the fountain there was a refreshing breath, for where the statue of the Satyr had once rested, there again ascended in the air, and down again, a sparkling spray of water with a cooling splash in the basin.

In the darkened house the invalid lay in her room, with open door—past which the household came on tiptoe and with bated breath.

The quiet had been like this on many midsummer afternoons that Marjorie remembered—her grandmother asleep in the darkened parlor, while old Mammy nodded in her chair on the back porch, and the shadow finger crept around the dial.

To Rand there was a lonesomeness about it such as he had noticed creeping through the house after he went to bed when Mammy snuffed out the candle and left him in the dark waiting for his mother to come upstairs. This feeling did not come often in the daytime, however, and he was glad when his mother received permission to go in search of a book that she found necessary in her appointed task of research. Baron d'Holbret, the "invisible eye," that looking through the open door of the sick room, rested upon the household—sent the message, and Marjorie, delighted to escape from the espionage of this "invisible eye," decided to go

over to "Rattle and Snap" and visit Mrs. Clay. She had not seen her old friend for a long time, beside .in Mr. Clay's fine library, the only thing left of their once great wealth, she felt sure that she would find the book required.

Much to the disappointment of Rand, he found that his mother and himself were not to take their walk alone. As they left the house, they were joined by the new master of the "Shelter," whose overtures to the little boy were received with a distant demeanor. Marjorie would have much preferred also going alone with Rand, but she felt that she could offer no reasonable objection to the husband of her employer walking with her. Baron d'Holbret evidently did not take into consideration the mental attitude of either Marjorie or Rand. He was only considering his own, which was decidedly in favor of escaping from the darkened sick room where he had spent so many unpleasant hours. and of walking with Marjorie to her destination, wherever that might be.

Neither spoke until there was a gleam through the trees of the fluted white columns of Mrs. Clay's colonial home.

"I am struck with the beauty of the old houses here," the Baron declared. "I have never seen anything to equal them in this country. I suppose they are the remains of ante-bellum days?"

"Many of them are of historic interest," replied Marjorie. "Mrs. Clay's grandfather was an officer on General Washington's staff. He was a surveyor, and received from the Government in payment, land in his native state, then called Franklin. To each of his five sons he gave a magnificent estate, with houses built by workmen sent from a colonial state. 'Rattle and Snap,' however, was lo-

cated with script won in a wager on a game popular at that time. It was played with beans and called by this name, 'Rattle and Snap.'"

"Is it possible that this game has deteriorated into what the darkies call 'craps'?" the Baron inquired smiling.

"No, I think not. It is more probable that it has been dignified, as you may consider it, into the game called poker."

"A most amusing game, and one at which an unlucky player can lose more money than he can afford!" declared the Baron, a little ruefully. "May I smoke?" he continued, turning to Marjorie, and taking out a silver match safe that brought to her some sense of recollection.

As she looked at her companion and noted his unusual height, his handsome head, and slightly sarcastic smile, she was struck for the first time with his personality, one, she decided that might invite admiration, but would not establish confidence.

"If Madame will pardon my being a little personal," the Baron said, striking a light, "I have decided that she is entirely lacking in one feminine characteristic."

"If you mean curiosity, I have never seen any reason to consider that a feminine prerogative!"

"It is a trait implanted by Nature in the feminine breast, so that the humble male may occasionally excite sufficient interest to receive recognition. I intimated that I had seen you before and yet you have asked no question."

"I consider it simply a case of mistaken identity!"

"Then, you are wrong." Baron d'Holbret stopped and flicked from his coatsleeve a small deposit of

white ashes that had fallen from his cigar. "If it interests you at all, I will inform you that you were surrounded by the elite of the city on the occasion to which I refer."

"I still hold to my original idea. You have certainly mistaken me for someone else."

"Ce n'est pas possible. I have never known any one at all like you, Madame."

"As for the people by whom I was surrounded, and whom you describe as the 'elite,'" continued Marjorie hurriedly, "perhaps you think I should feel flattered by such a description of my companions, but I do not admit that I am."

"That is a most cruel and ungracious speech, and requires an explanation. Are you not becoming even a little bit curious?"

"No, not in the least."

"Then I must keep the time and the place to myself, as a charming recollection," he smiled enigmatically. "But I am still waiting for your explanation."

"That I can very easily give you," said Marjorie smiling, "I meant that very likely you and I have a very different idea of what constitutes the best society."

"Do not think that I mean to cast any reflection upon your choice of an environment," he continued.

"This environment is not my choice," said Marjorie with decision. "Circumstances have brought it about, and so I am here."

"Then you do not believe in those forces through which we can make our own circumstances and environments?"

"I am not prepared to discuss so weighty a question," replied Marjorie lightly.

"Not with all the wisdom you have absorbed in my wife's library and that of Mr. Clay? Surely, I have seen you poring over very scholarly looking volumes."

"I have found much to interest me in both libraries," Marjorie acknowledged. "I am greatly attracted by the natural sciences which I have taken upon Rand's account."

"Shall you teach him to believe in evolution?"

Marjorie simply smiled at the Baron's interest in Rand's education.

"Speaking of the natural sciences," he continued, "have you observed that the great scientists are turning their thoughts more and more to the investigation of psychic forces, and their bearing upon human life?"

"Yes," answered Marjorie, interested in spite of herself, "and it is a sign of the times."

"The greatest thinkers," the Baron went on, as if she had not spoken, "do not disdain to investigate the phenomena of spiritualism, hypnotism and other subjects which were formerly dismissed as mere trickery."

"I have never liked the idea of hypnotic suggestions," declared Marjorie. "I feel that it interferes with personal freedom, and so has a sinister side that is unpleasant to me."

Baron d'Holbret looked at her keenly. The suggestion of the animal that derogated from his intellectual dignity and also that of craft had given way to feeling. He seemed more human and appealing than Marjorie had yet seen. It was but for a moment, however, and then he shrugged his shoulders.

"I see that you have made good use of your time at all events," he said. "Is it presuming to say that

so lovely a woman as Mrs. Wyngate should not think so much?"

Then seeing that Marjorie was slightly displeased by this personal comment, he continued: "Perhaps we can discuss these subjects another day. I am told that Mr. Robin Bonnycastle is deeply versed in occult lore, and that all his neighbors stand in awe of his attainments."

They were almost at the end of their walk, and now turned at an exclamation from Rand. On a piece of wood that he held, a wasp had lighted on a caterpillar and was slowly stinging its victim into unconsciousness.

"My mother can tell you just what the wasp is doing," Rand declared. "Tell him, Mama."

"I suspect that there is not much that 'my mother' does not know," said the Baron. smiling.

"I think that she knows pretty nearly everything," remarked Rand indulgently.

"Someone has said that a child is 'a genius without capacity,'" said Baron d'Holbret. "They seem to have an intuition for the realities of life and character not always possessed by their elders. You will see with what vast respect I shall treat Rand, Mrs. Wyngate. I feel that before his large and innocent eyes all the dark deeds of my life may be uncovered."

He smiled as he spoke, as if it were half in jest, but Marjorie detected an undercurrent of seriousness in his tone. Rand, who had been engrossed with the wasp, looked up quickly. but said nothing.

"You see," Marjorie blushed faintly, as she ignored Baron d'Holbret's comment, "Rand and I are fond of natural history and are now becoming acquainted with some of the birds and insects of which before we have only read." She bent down

to the child who was watching intently the bit of natural history being enacted before him.

"See, Rand," she said eagerly, "there is only one spot where the caterpillar can be stung, and the wasp has found it. By and by it will be dragged into the tiny crevice that is to be its future nursery. This it will carefully seal, and when the little wasps hatch out they will find their daily food already provided for them in the body of the unfortunate caterpillar. The wasp is too careful a mother, however, to have provided anything but pleasant food for her little wasps, for the caterpillar has been merely stung into unconsciousness, and when the little fellows are ready to eat, the caterpillar will be hardly more than freshly slain."

"That interests me very much," declared the Baron, who, indeed. seemed to be fascinated by the proceedings of the wasp. "After all, the lower orders of creation have their prototypes in those above them. The wasp is in his way a symbol. A cannibal, yes; but so are some men. Certainly in the business world. You have provided me with food for reflection, and perhaps have given me an idea."

"Speaking of the lower orders of creation," Marjorie went on quietly, "one thing has made me respect the religious beliefs of the East: the greater humanity that they teach for animals. It is only in the Christian world that it is necessary to form 'Humane Societies' to protect the brute from the greater brute."

"Is not this consideration the result of a belief that the soul of an ancestress may look from the green eyes of a cat? Did you ever speculate as to what animal form you may have inhabited in a former incarnation?"

"I think I was a dog, a fine bird dog," Marjorie said, waving her hand to Mrs. Clay, who saw them from the garden.

"And I?"

Marjorie regarded him critically.

"You were probably a fox. A handsome silver gray fox," she said reflectively.

"The dog runs the fox to cover," Baron d'Holbret raised his eyebrows whimsically.

"In this instance the dog would be very sorry to enter a race with so experienced and crafty a reynard," Marjorie said quickly.

As she spoke, Baron d'Holbret turned suddenly and regarded her so fixedly that Marjorie felt the same sensation of chill that she remembered to have experienced in the garden. Before she had recovered from her surprise, he had lifted his hat and left them standing at Mrs. Clay's door.

CHAPTER XII

Mrs. Clay, having finished her morning task, still lingered in the garden, fanning her flushed cheeks with a large garden hat. Not here, as at the "Shelter," were the beds filled with rare roses, and bright hued poppies; or trim walks bordered with box. A hedge of crepe myrtle surrounded the garden, and from this border of purplish pink, the eye sank to a level of long straight rows of vegetables. Near Mrs. Clay her small name sake, Katharyn, dug in the soft earth, making a miniature garden, and a little farther on the head gardener from "Robin's Roost," Andrew Markham, stood tying into small parcels, mint, parsley, thyme, and sage, to be shipped with the vegetables to the nearest market.

Andrew. on account of his long service and integrity, was regarded by the family, more as a friend than as an employee. Each morning he came over to assist Mrs. Clay, bringing a message or some delicacy from Mr. Bonnycastle, and on the way he frequently stopped to have a talk with Rand.

As he now caught sight of Marjorie and Rand, he pushed back his cap, his fine, strong face lighting up with pleasure. Mrs. Clay had finished her work with a sigh of relief, and having seen her visitors as they came through the lawn, she advanced toward them with extended hands.

"How glad I am to see you both," she cried. "Katharyn will be out presently, Rand. She is

having a clean pinafore put on. The child was a sight! I have a surprise for you, Marjorie. Probably, though. you have heard?"

Marjorie shook her head. "Judging from your expression I should say that it was something of a very pleasant nature. Mr. Clay has walked down into the garden? No? The market man has sent you an unusually large check?"

"You are not a good guesser. I will wager, however, that in less than three hours you will be informed." Mrs. Clay looked mischievous.

"Dont' be mysterious! I am inclined to be a little elated myself this morning. The Baroness was brought downstairs in the arms of her husband, and became so amiable in consequence that she dispensed with my services for the rest of the day."

"I am very glad, for I wish to have a talk with you, and if you do not object, we will wait here on the gallery until these things are sent off by Mr. Market Man."

Mrs. Clay smiled as she spoke, but in the bright light Marjorie noticed lines on her face that had never shown themselves before.

"I shall be glad to have a moment's rest. This marketing had to be attended to, although we have had more than one arrival this morning. Appolina's mother-in-law—I think that she is going to stay," Mrs. Clay spoke with sudden unction, "You know, one can never account for what an 'in-law' will do! The strain——"

"Of keeping Appolina in check?" suggested Marjorie. "I know now, that was your surprise. I remember Appolina of old."

"I assure you," Mrs. Clay replied nervously, "Appolina realizes how much depends upon this visit.

She is doing away with various unfavorable reports, and I can see she has made a good impression. Mrs. Blair is very strict in her ideas. You know," she lowered her voice, "she is a lineal descendant of one of the Pilgrim Fathers, whose views she seems to have inherited."

"I have always been proud of my New England ancestry, but amused at the witticism 'They first fell upon their knees, and then upon the aborigines,'" quoted Marjorie, mischievously. "and Appolina is now figuring as the aborigines?"

Mrs. Clay could not help smiling. "Never pity Appolina!" she exclaimed, shaking her head. "You see," she continued, "this is Mrs. Blair's first visit to her, so it would be delightful if things would go smoothly. She lives in retirement, and gives to several women's clubs her patronage, for which they probably care very little, but doubtless a good deal for the liberal checks which accompany it. But this is not what is worrying me at present," Mrs. Clay sighed, then tried to smile. "After I saw you last, Marjorie, Mr. Clay became quite ill, and in the midst of my solicitude about him. Andrew Markham brought me word that my brother had gone off on one of the mysterious journeys of which I have told you." Mrs. Clay spoke slowly, but with a thoughtful and puzzled expression. "My brother has had remarkable results from some of his electrical experiments, but it was not until after a great sorrow that he developed powers that seem almost supernatural."

Mrs. Clay paused, and looked about her apprehensively, as if fearing that this last statement might reach the ears of her orthodox guest.

"I need not tell you, dear child, that Mr. Clay and I have always found our spiritual help in the

services of the Church, and especially in the Holy Communion, which seems to us the highest form of worship. But Robin is so wonderful that his ways can never be our ways, and so we do not cavil at them, no matter how much they may differ from our own." She spoke with deep earnestness, as always when speaking of her brother, and now that she had seen him Marjorie understood this far better than she had done before.

There was a short pause, which Marjorie ended by saying: "How is Mr. Clay this morning?"

"I left him walking about the room with Appolina," replied Mrs. Clay. "I might be uneasy if old Caesar were not also in the room."

As Mrs. Clay finished speaking, there was a faint rustle of skirts on the gallery, and looking up, Marjorie recognized her old friend, Appolina.

It struck Marjorie that the "sea green" color of her eyes was of a deeper shade than formerly. The thin white cotton gown that she wore, showing the perfection of her well-developed figure, was not whiter than her skin, and her nut brown hair looked ever more luxuriant than Marjorie remembered it.

"You remember Marjorie, of course?" said Mrs. Clay. "How you two used to quarrel as children over who should play with Decimus!"

"I did most of the quarreling," said Appolina, frankly. "Decimus always liked Marjorie the best. I only hope that our last encounter has faded from her recollection, or I do not know whether she regards me as one of her dearest enemies, or one of her bitterest friends!"

Marjorie smiled.

"At all events, let us kiss and make up!" Appolina said, laughingly. "It is no news to you, of

course, that Decimus is still mourning his lost hopes? Poor fellow, you certainly did treat him outrageously."

"I believe you have hidden him somewhere, Appolina," laughed Marjorie, "for he has not been near me since I came here."

Appolina gave her a strange look. "Oh, Mother," she cried suddenly, "I forgot to tell you that I had to shut Katharyn up in the closet just now. I certainly hope her screams cannot be heard downstairs; goodness knows, they are loud enough. You see," she turned to Marjorie, "it is only when my daughter is utterly exhausted that she appears to advantage, and at that favorable moment I wish to present her to her grandmother Blair. By the way, I am going to take my in-law for a walk in the garden presently. Aren't you all dying to come?"

Marjorie shook her head. She much preferred paying a visit to Mr. Clay, with whom she was a great favorite, and went in search of him with Mrs. Clay.

"I am so sorry you have been left alone so long, my dear Lucius," said Mrs. Clay, as they entered his room. "Appolina is naturally a little upset."

"Appolina upset? Oh, yes, I remember, Mrs. Blair is here," he replied, in a tone implying that that explained everything. "I cannot tell you the pleasure it gives me to see you," he continued, turning to Marjorie with a courtliness that made the twenty years he had passed in dreary routine of chronic invalidism seem an impossibility. "Our little Appolina has been writing a paper to be read before a 'Mother's Meeting,' and the effort that this required partially accounts for her absence of mind. That she should so far depart from tradition as to

appear at a public meeting affects me much more deeply! Perhaps, you remember the charming description that John Adams, our second President, gave of Dorothy Quincy, in writing to his wife in 1775. 'Among a hundred men, almost at this house,' the letter runs, 'she lives and behaves with modesty, dignity, and discretion. She avoids talking on politics; in large and mixed company she is totally silent, as a lady ought to be.' If Andrew Markham can spare us a few sprigs of mint, my dear Marjorie, we will ask Mrs. Clay to make us a julep." Mr. Clay, pleased with his description of what constituted ideal womanhood in the year 1775, leaned back, smiling, with closed eyes, probably in pleasant anticipation of the approaching julep.

"My dear Lucius!" Mr. Clay opened his eyes, for there was slight asperity in his wifes' tone. "I did not hear who was responsible for that quotation from American history. No one of importance, I hope. I have always thought of Dorothy Quincy as a woman of intelligence, and if such were the case, I can see no reason why she should have been relegated to the background, and commended because she did not open her lips in public. I certainly am not what you call a 'new woman,' but I rejoice that a woman is now supposed to converse with her male friends and relatives on the same plane of intelligence. However, something of more importance presents itself now! Do you not think we had better delay the julep?" Mrs. Clay gave her husband a little propitiatory pat. "You see, Appolina's 'in-law' will return from the garden in a few minutes, and Mrs. Blair has *prejudices!* We must not in any way endanger our dear child's future."

CHAPTER XIII

When Andrew Markham brought up the mint for the julep, he stood silent for a few moments, his cap in his hand.

"I hae gi'ed Rand a colt, Mistress Wyngate," he said respectfully, "an' as ye pass down by the paisture ye may care to hae a luke at him."

Marjorie gladly assented, and after she had made her adieux, followed by Rand, who had never left the Scotchman's side, they walked through the garden on their way to the pasture.

Andrew was about to let down the bars, over which Rand in his eagerness had already climbed.

"No, let the horses come to us, Andrew," said Marjorie. "Mrs. Clay always calls them from the pasture, and I love to see them. Perhaps the colt may be timid, too, Rand, and run away from you."

"Except a few Jersey coos, and the mare, 'Bonny Kate,' we are nae needin' bluided stock on a veegetable fairm," Andrew said, drawing attention to Mrs. Clay's blooded mare. "See, laddie, there is the colt!"

"He is almost a grown horse and such a beauty!" Marjorie exclaimed.

"Weel, weel, he has gude bluid, an' when he grows to his laigs he 'ill be a hansom' beastie."

"But, Andrew," protested Mariorje, "he is so valuable, I do not see how we can accept him!" Then with the tightening of the throat that she always felt when anyone was kind to Rand, "Why are you so good to my boy?"

"Rand is a lad o' pairts, Mistress Wyngate, and he ha' nae feyther, nor brither, an' nae hame. Only a braw wee mither to stan' up for him against the warld, an 'if an old Scotchman wi' nae bairn o' his own chuses to gi' him a colt, surely it is his own affair!"

"Look how he runs, Mama!" cried Rand, clapping his hands.

"He ran across the pasture as if he had been shot from a gun," Marjorie replied. "So, if it pleases Rand, we will call him Bullet."

"Bullet, Bullet, do you know that is your name?" called Rand, wild with delight.

The colt kicked up his heels in such an awkward way that both Rand and Marjorie began to laugh heartily. Presently he began to graze, as unconcernedly as if no such things as human beings existed.

"When Meester Bonnycastle gangs awa' as he talks of daein', maybe Rand and I can gae to the fairm, and he can ride Bullet himsel'. I must gang my gait the noo! I hae an idea that Rand will be aroun' the morn to see the beastie."

There was a twinkle in the Scotchmans' eye as he doffed his cap. and strode off toward "Robin's Roost," while Marjorie and Rand, in an animated discussion concerning the attributes and perfections of Bullet, proceeded gaily toward the woods.

Rand's joy over the colt had completely banished from Marjorie's mind all thought of her late experiences at the Clay's, and she and Rand were as carefree and unconcerned as Bullet himself. The day was one of serene beauty and brilliant sunshine, the whole of nature seeming to be in holiday dress.

From the trees above them came the notes of

birds carolling of nests and mating, of their lives hidden from human view in that trembling world of semi-lucent leaves.

Two or three times they stopped to listen, and then continued their walk to the shade of a great tree.

Here Marjorie opened a basket that Mrs. Clay had placed in her hands as she left the house. Beneath the snowy napkin there were slices of bread stuck togther with golden butter and preserves. Next she lifted from the basket a box filled with pieces of chicken, with crisp corn cakes fried to a delicate brown.

As they ate seated on the root of a tree, a squirrel, his cheek full of nuts, peeped excitedly at them from time to time, until it finally scampered to safety around the bole of the tree.

As a wonderful blue butterfly flitted past, Rand ran off in pursuit, and Marjorie went in search of a spring. It was some time before she found it, hidden in a clump of undergrowth, and kneeling down, she took a long, deep draught. How cold and limpid, how delicious it was! And yet—hidden away from mortal eyes, how useless!

In answer to her thought there was a flutter of wings, and a bird, lighting on the brim, dipped its beak into the spring, and soon after she saw the eyes of some small shy animal shining at her from the underbrush, as it crept stealthily toward the spring. And, even yet, the little spring may not have fulfilled its mission. Who knows the outcome of any humble life?

Marjorie looked again into the water. She was still young, and here she looked even younger, almost a child! Her cheeks were flushed, and escaping from the hair pins that held it, her hair hung

in curling locks to her waist. Smiling back at her image, she repeated softly: "As in water face answereth face." In the stillness her voice seemed to come back. She stopped to listen to a happy laugh from Rand, and then throwing her arm around a sapling that formed a part of the thicket, she bent down nearer to the water.

A shadow—growing larger until it took the form of a man, darkened the face of the pool.

CHAPTER XIV

"Decimus!" Marjorie cried. "How you startled me!"

Decimus drew Marjorie to him across the little spring, and walking together toward a great oak they found refuge from the noonday sun, beneath its sheltering branches.

Decimus still held Marjorie's hand in his strong grasp—his warm brown eyes sought her own. "How many years, little girl, it has been——"

"If you will return my hand, *Big Man,* we might count them," Marjorie replied, mischievously. "At any rate, we are neither of us yet very *infirm!*"

"The thought suggests itself to me that something beside a cold handshake would be admissible between people who were early playmates!"

"And regarded each other with a brotherly and sisterly affection," Marjorie interposed demurely.

Decimus threw back his head with a laugh, and having made Marjorie comfortable, now stretched his long limbs and leaned back against the bole of the tree before he replied: "When we count time by heartbeats it may seem very long," he at last said gravely. "To me it has seemed an eternity since I saw you last. In reality, I suppose, not much more than ten years has gone by since I carried your books to school and fought your battles, that is, the other little boys who also wanted to go along. Later, there were *big* boys who wanted to carry them. You never seemed to care, I often wondered why there were so many?"

"Probably nature provides a woman with a great many lovers so that in the end she will be certain to get a husband," Marjorie replied, laughing.

"How could I have ever thought"—Decimus spoke with slight bitterness—"that *I* should be the fortunate one who would win you? Just before matriculating at college, I heard that you were to marry Lawrence Wyngate. I then fought with myself a fiercer battle than ever before waged in your cause. Nothing now seemed worth while, and in this mood my uncle Robin Bonnycastle advised me to travel."

"Mr. Bonnycastle is not a man, he is already, I think, a glorified spirit!" Marjorie exclaimed. "Tell me about the places you visited."

"At first," Decimus hesitated, "you see I was only a boy, Marjorie, and I was very angry with you, for although you had given me no reason to think so—I did believe you cared a little for me, and I thought you might have written to me. My impulse was to vent my brute rage on other brutes. You know I am something of a shot, and I decided to go out to Africa and shoot big game. I stopped at Nariobe, near me was the Juja farm owned by Mr. McMillan, a wealthy St. Louisan. A wonderful place! On my return home from Africa, I found myself again restless, and went out West where I stayed until rapidly getting into the condition of the famous 'Mugwi' Mr. Kipling tells us about in one of his stories, that being brought for the first time into civilization, had to go out on the boat deck and give forth terrible roars to relieve his feelings. I felt it encumbent upon me to return."

"And now?" Marjorie in her interest drew nearer to Decimus.

"Oh, now, I am hard at work trying to make up for lost time," Decimus replied. "I am actuated by a very strong motive. Indeed, I have but one object in life. Do you know what that is, Marjorie?" Decimus' hand closed more closely over Marjorie's. "My aunt has been telling me something of your life here in your old home with this foreign nobleman and his wife, who iniquitously bought it in. I want you to give your life in my keeping and let me take you away from here. My one object now is to please you, and to please *Rand.*" Decimus threw back his big shoulders with a laugh. "When one storms a citadel you know, they must find its *weakest* point."

"And would you give up the fortune that will be yours if you remain a celibate?" Marjorie asked, in a low voice.

"Fortune? nonsense! Do you suppose I would give up the only woman I ever loved for a fortune. That is, if I can win her," Decimus exclaimed. "I was reading a little romance the other day that reminds me somewhat of your case and mine. It speaks of the tide in human emotions that are as recurrent and as faithful to the ages as the seasons of Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter in nature. There is a return of the tide as surely as the harvest follows the sowing of the grain. Since you would not give me a place in the springtime of your life, Marjorie, will you not give me it's Summer? Your life—"

"My life," interposed Marjorie quickly, "has been a great joy, a great sorrow, and then a wonderful treasure that came out of it. I have given my life to my boy, Decimus. Here comes Rand now!"

Rand, flushed and happy, came running toward

them, holding something up in his small closed hand.

"That last butterfly turned into a leaf, Mama," he cried. And then, having been introduced to Decimus, Rand left his small disengaged hand in Decimus' large one, which argued well for their future friendship.

"Did you know, Mr. Clay," he asked, "that butterflies sometimes escape their enemies by pretending that they are leaves?"

"Insects and sometimes reptiles also make themselves resemble flowers to escape their enemies, and also to capture them, Rand," Decimus said, drawing the little boy down by him. "I saw something of the kind lately. Uncle Robin has a plantation across the river from the western part of the state, that I have under my care. By the way, the old Scotchman, Andrew Markham, has a 'fairm' near by. I was walking through the swamp when I noticed a brilliant red flower. What attracted me to it was a number of insects that, after hovering over the flower for a short time, mysteriously disappeared. What do you think it was? A lizard! The little wretch had only its head above the ground so that it looked exactly like a small, red flower that grows on the levee, and the insects, thinking that they were coming to the flower, came instead to the lizard's mouth."

"I think you must know a great deal," Rand said, regarding Decimus with grave approval. "Almost as much as my mother and Mr. Bonnycastle. Mr. Bonnycastle is still a little boy; are you a little boy, too?"

"Yes, I am a little boy who is going to grow into a giant," Decimus replied, rising that he might impress Rand with his six feet of length. "I

haven't any use for grown-ups. Every man and woman who are worth while are still little boys and girls, who enjoy the simple things in life, and scorn the artificial ones. There is your mother! She never will be a 'grown-up.' I wager now she often plays 'chick-a-macrany crow,' and 'puss in the corner' with you. I could tell you a great many things about her when she was little"—Marjorie held up a warning finger—"she could make *me* do anything she wished, she has often made me bite the dust, and now I am going to bite it for you."

Taking a small round peg that he had been carefully whittling, Decimus buried it in the ground and then, leaning down, after several tugs he drew it up, held firmly between his white teeth.

"He mumbled the peg!" Rand cried ecstatically.

"There are times when I really love you, Decimus!" Marjorie exclaimed.

"Not as a brother! Anything but that," Decimus shook his head lugubriously. "There is something, Marjorie, Decimus continued gravely, putting up his hand to a lock of hair that Marjorie remembered in past years always stood up rebelliously when Decimus was disturbed by any emotion. "I would like to know something of this French baron."

"Not now," Marjorie replied, impulsively. "See, the shadows are lengthening. We must hurry! You know I do not return now to the home of my grandmother, but to that of a stranger, in whose employ I am. Listen, do you not hear someone talking?" Peering through the great oaks under which they now rapidly walked, they saw two figures seated near together beneath one of the trees.

"Do you know who they are?"

Marjorie clutched the arm of Decimus. "It is Baron d'Holbert, and——Appolina!"

"Do you mean Madame d'Holbret's husband? Why should he be with Appolina?" Decimus asked slowly. "My aunt tells me that he comes over every day. If Appolina were my sister, or my sweetheart——"

"She is very near kin!" Marjorie suggested.

"Yes, my double cousin," Decimus replied, with some reluctance, "so the relationship is very near. It is difficult to realize, however, that Appolina can be the daughter of my uncle and aunt. With their pride in ancestry, their love of tradition and high ideals, Baron d'Holbret had better be careful. He should be especially careful in his own household!" There was menace in Decimus' tone.

They had reached the door of the "Shelter," and after a hasty handshake, and promise that she would see Decimus the next day. Marjorie hurried up to the room of Madame d'Holbret, the stern arbiter of her present fate.

CHAPTER XV

With Marjorie, Decimus had taken Rand into his heart, and for two weeks the trio spent a part of each day in the woods together; seated beneath the great trees, or sometimes fishing by the banks of a beautiful stream that brought to Decimus and Marjorie many reminiscences of their childhood, over which they laughed. And now Decimus' visit had come to a close. He was to leave on the next day, and Marjorie had promised him that she would be up to see him start on his way. The September nights were oppressive, and made restless by the heat, she rose at dawn and kneeling down by the low window, looked out at the approaching day. In the sky fleecy clouds floated across the heavens, the stars had faded out, and the glow of orange light in the East had deepened into banks of glowing crimson. Rand rested peacefully. Marjorie leaned over and kissed him as he slept, and then listening to what sounded like voices on the front steps beneath, she peered down from the window.

Yes, it seemed difficult to credit her senses, but there were two figures seated together on the steps. Appolina, foolish woman, who piqued herself upon the fact that she had never declined a "dare" had accepted a challenge she had heard her laugh over, from Baron d'Holbret to meet him at dawn at his own door. But there were other eyes that might spy them out in the gray light seated talking together, who might not understand that Appolina

was only an unusually foolish, and spoiled young woman. What construction might they put upon this meeting? Madame d'Holbret was an early riser, there was nothing to keep her from seeing and drawing inferences! As Marjorie deliberated as to what it was best for her to do Appolina rose, and throwing a large gray veil lightly over her hat, she walked quickly across the lawn to the gap in the hedge that divided the two places.

In the eyes of the world a "blunder is worse than a crime." The knowledge of Appolina's folly must never humiliate the proud hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Clay. People with whom the pride of ancestry, the keeping of their name spotless before the world, counted before all else. They had been Marjorie's best friends, she would make any sacrifice to save them, but what could she do? Tell Decimus? She would only see him for a few minutes before he left. Beside, while there had never been any affection between Decimus and Appolina, he was very proud. In his resentment, he might do something rash, and make a situation more serious in the public eyes than it in reality warranted. With a sudden sense of chill, Marjorie drew her thin nightdress closely about her, and then realizing the hour, she rose and dressed hurriedly.

She was barely in time to see Decimus and Mrs. Clay, who had walked over with him, and now she stood in the grove watching him as his broad shoulders were gradually hidden by the trees. Twice he turned and waved his hand with a faint attempt to smile, and as an angle cut him off from view, Marjorie sank down on a bench, near where they had stood, overpowered by a sudden sense of desolation. She had sent Decimus from her without a word that would lead him to hope that he

might ever be more to her than at present. She might never see him again! He was needed here, she should probably have said more to him, have given him some intimation of the imprudence of Appolina's conduct. Should she speak to *her?* If she did it would be to incur her everlasting animosity, and effect no good. To Marjorie there recurred now Decimus' parting words, "I shall always love you, and should I be at the uttermost parts of the earth, and you send a word to me, I shall come to you." As he spoke he had clasped her hand with such force that she examined now, with languid interest, the crushed member. Except a pink and crumpled appearance, however, it bore no visible evidence of that hearty handshake.

Marjorie walked slowly to the house, and to the back gallery where she could hear Rand laughing, and see his brown head bobbing up and down in the garden between the bright-hued poppies. From the gallery she decided to go to the laundry in search of Mammy.

The peacock, preening as usual his bronze and gold plumage in the sun, when he saw her, uttered his peculiar call, and back of him a turkey gobbler, unaware that he was to grace a Thanksgiving dinner, and already perked up with good living, took such exception at her appearance that she was obliged to take refuge in the laundry door. Here, instead of Mammy's presiding, as usual, over the ironing board, she was surprised to find that "Aunt Esther" had taken her place, and in answer to an inquiry as to Mammy's whereabouts, she was told that Madame had sent for her and that she had not returned.

Feeling a little uneasy, Marjorie started in search of the old woman, and as she passed through

the hall she peeped into the library. How cool and dark it looked, how inviting its dim recesses! Remembering a book she desired, she walked in and stood before the shelves that lined the walls on every side, filled with handsomely bound volumes. Except Rand, these books were her most congenial companions, and she touched with caressing fingers their bindings of crimson, and morocco, and gold. There was one thing about all the books that seemed unaccountable to her. In many of them she noticed the name of the owner had been erased. It had the appearance of having been done recently, and yet, except Baron d'Holbret and herself, she felt sure that no one had access to the library keys.

Pondering over this, it seemed to her rather singular circumstance, she had turned to leave the room, with the book under her arm, before she realized that she was not the only occupant of the library. Standing with his back to the light, his tall figure garbed in the pale gray that seemed to suit him so well, his head silhouted against the dark wainscoting of the room, she saw Baron d'Holbret watching her, and as their eyes met, she recoiled.

"The fair Priestess of the library has been chary of her presence lately!" he said, laying down the book that he held in his hand. His voice was compelling, and filled with the caressing quality that it is so hard for a woman to resist. It had no appeal for Marjorie, however, her one thought was that this man was the husband of her employer, and that whatever her dislike for him might be, if she remained in his house, it was incumbent upon her to treat him with outward respect, at least.

"I think, Baron, that you express yourself more

poetically than the occasion warrants," she replied, raising her eyes slowly to his face.

The Baron laughed, rather oddly. "Come," he said decisively, "talk to me for a little while!" He drew up a chair, and almost before she realized it, she was seated, and her companion was leaning eagerly toward her.

A silence had suddenly fallen upon them and Marjorie began to feel troubled by the intensity of his gaze.

"I think Madame must need me,' 'she began, "I was about to——"

Placing his hand over her lips. before she could finish the sentence, d'Holbret drew her suddenly to him, and held her closely, his eyes burning into her own.

"You know perfectly well, Marjorie Wyngate," he said in a low, distinct tone, "that I love you, and you alone. Do you imagine for a moment that if I had known *you* that the fortune of this elderly woman would have tempted me? As for other women, they are mere creatures of flesh and blood who succumb to my will, but you—you are the sweetest woman God ever made."

Shrinking from him, Marjorie would have cried out in indignation, but as she endeavored to escape, an expression of baffled rage and dismay passed over Baron d'Holbret's face, his hand fell from her, and turning Marjorie saw standing in the doorway—the Baroness!

CHAPTER XVI

"Pray do not allow me to disturb this interesting tableau!" Madame d'Holbret said, in a tone of biting irony.

As she spoke, a long line of light fell across the doorway, touching the scar on her cheek into a livid finger print. She turned her head, and Marjorie saw standing back of her, Mrs. Clay and Appolina.

"I believe that this Mrs. Wyngate is a friend of yours, Mrs. Clay, and also of your daughter, Mrs. Blair. Allow me to introduce her to you in another new role that she is playing, that of "The Lady in Gray," who heavily veiled, has tete-a-tetes on my doorstep at dawn with my husband and to avert suspicion, steals out from the house, only to return, doubtless, a little later!"

"Oh, no! No!" Marjorie cried, making an effort not to look at Appolina, and turning to Mrs. Clay, who stood regarding her too aghast for words.

"I thought it only right that I should give you some intimation of her real character, on account of your daughter, and I shall certainly do so to others," Madame d'Holbret said.

"Probably there is a mistake, and some one else affects these early hours," Appolina said lightly, an expression almost of amusement in her strange eyes. "One of the servants, perhaps, going on an errand."

"I cannot imagine to what my wife refers," Baron d'Holbret exclaimed, the color coming back

to his face. "Mrs. Wyngate, you are an early riser, can you not enlighten us?"

"Yes, I am an early riser," replied Marjorie slowly. Her voice was almost inaudible.

Appolina seemed about to speak, but some counter impulse evidently restrained her.

"It is very kind of you, Mrs. Blair, to throw a mantle of charity over your friend," Madame d'Holbret said, ignoring her husband, and looking straight at Appolina. "I have often wondered why my secretary found it necessary to rise at daybreak. Certainly not to fulfil any duty connected with her work."

"This misunderstanding is entirely due to my deplorable temper," declared the Baron, with apparent magnanimity. "Mrs. Wyngate would not accept my judgment about a certain book. She was so positive that she angered me, and you know my temper, Charlotte."

"I have had occasion to do so," his wife returned dryly.

Her eyes followed him as he stooped to pick up a small book which had fallen to the floor, as if in corroboration of this statement.

"Marjorie Wyngate is one of our earliest friends," said Mrs. Clay, lifting her head proudly, with a flash dangerously near to temper in her eyes. "I feel sure there is some mistake in this unwarranted accusation. You rose at an early hour this morning, Marjorie. Did you see a woman in grey, heavily veiled, leave the house?"

"I should prefer not answering your question," Marjorie replied, in a low voice.

Mrs. Clay regarded Marjorie with sudden consternation, and then turning away, she declined an invitation to remain, and left, followed by Appo-

lina, who, in her white dress with her glowing color and gay laughter, had made a radiant vision in the darkened room.

Baron d'Holbret had followed them to the door and Marjorie, without looking toward her employer, left the room and walked up stairs to the seclusion of her own room, where for some time she paced slowly up and down the floor. Her face grew troubled as she thought of Appolina; how easy it would have been for her to have explained the unsavory situation, but as it was, silence, until she, Marjorie, was brought out as the scapegoat, and then Appolina's cowardly refusal to tell the truth.

Marjorie longed to spare the Clay's any humiliation that Appolina's folly might bring upon them and would do so as long as honorable silence did not degenerate into a subtler form of cowardice.

It was only when her thoughts turned from Appolina to the Baron that her courage wavered and a fierce resentment grew within her. Was she to blame for what had happened? Surely she had shown in every way in her power, her aversion for Baron d'Holbret, and yet from the first day he had come he had deliberately thrown himself in her path, and had done his utmost to annoy her. What was there in her personality that could attract such a man? She could not help seeing that his infatuation, for she could call it nothing else, was not assumed, merely to frighten and intimidate a helpless woman. It was more real than anything else about him. Her brain whirled at last as she tried to think the matter out and to readjust her views of life. She must find some way to protect herself from a repetition of so humiliating an experience. Could she have been undignified, or lacking in

proper reserve? Searching her soul, she knew she had not. But then, why, why? Exhausted with thinking in a circle, she lay on her bed, dry-eyed, and desperately unhappy. Not only had she been insulted by an enemy, but her own familiar friends in whom she trusted seemed to have espoused his cause, and utterly deserted her. Would Decimus have done that? She knew he would not!

It was not until Rand and Mammy came in chatting together, and she had his young arms about her neck, that a relief she rarely indulged in came to her, and she gave way to tears.

"Sweet, good Mama!" Rand said, pressing her head to his little shoulder, and wiping the tears from her eyes. "Was it the Baron who hurt your feelings?"

Marjorie shook her head.

"I am glad of it!" An expression of relief passed over his face. "Madame has sent off my little black dog that I named Nigger, and she won't let Mammy stay here any longer! What do you think we had better do? Don't you believe, Mama. that Decimus would like to marry us? We could go away then, and live somewhere else."

"Precious darling!" Marjorie kissed his innocent blue eyes "I will do just what you want me to do."

"You know, it would be a good thing for Mammy, too," Rand said, eyeing Mammy judicially. "She could have an ironing room all to herself then, and not iron any clothes but her own."

"Blessed Lamb!" Mammy ejaculated, visibly affected by this provision for her comfort. "I told the Madame that, if she wasn't good to you and to your Ma, after I went away, that I was gwine 'cunjur' her and I surely will!" Mammy touched a

mysterious charm made of herbs that she always wore suspended around her neck. "She lowed that my eyesight was too poor to iron, so I asked her if she knew what made it so weak. She said no, she didn't, and I told her," Mammy raised her head with a toss, "that it was the shining of our family silver before the war that put out my sight. Then she lowed it was a pity we didn't *keep* some of that silver!"

Remembering how hard Mammy had worked, and how small her compensation, a wave of indignation swept over Marjorie. She realized she could not, with dignity, make this place any longer a home for herself and her child. But she faced a difficult situation, for now, and this for the first time in her life, the very necessities of living for her and Rand were dependent upon her own exertions. As she sat thinking, she glanced toward the old cheval glass, opposite to which she sat. On her arrival at the "Shelter," she had been assigned the room that had been occupied by her mother in her girlhood. The walls, though faded, were still pink; over the bedstead there was a heavy gold ring through which pink damask curtains and filmy lace had once been drawn. The cheval glass bore peculiar interest for Marjorie, for here, doubtless, her mother had taken a lingering glance at her beautiful face on that last night when she had so bravely gone out to build up the fallen fortunes of the family, in a world that, after this seclusion, she must have feared and dreaded. Marjorie saw in the mirror that her face was still tear-stained, but in the innocent talk of her child, and the old woman, that laughter had come back to her lips, and she came to a sudden determination. She

would go and see Mr. Bonnycastle; she had not seen him since a memorable evening when she had walked over with Decimus, and while, of course, she could not tell him of what had just taken place in regard to Appolina, his words were always full of an inspiration that would throw light on the darkest path.

The clock in the hall was striking an hour. Five o'clock! She walked to the window and looked out at a leaden sky. There was every prospect of one of the thunder showers that were so frequent at this time of the year; they soon passed, however, and if she hurried, she might have time to go over and see Mr. Bonnycastle before the rain. Slipping a waterproof about her, and with a farewell kiss to Rand, she pinned on her hat as she went down the steps, and walked rapidly through the grove, and the short stretch of turnpike that led to Mr. Bonnycastle's gate. Here she stopped and looked toward the town. The "Knob," a high, bare hill, hid its bald head in the low skurrying clouds, and across the heavens there flashed a long zigzag line of light.

Marjorie drew her cloak more closely about her, and ran toward the house, where a sudden gust of wind almost blew her into the open door.

"The Maister's waiting fur ye all the noon!" Janet Markham said, closing the door quickly—"and I ran doon to open the door when I saw ye comin' awa' through the storm."

"I liked it!" Marjorie said, laughing. "But how could Mr. Bonnycastle have known that I was coming?"

Janet, her kindly Scotch face beaming with welcome, shook her head, and having been divested of

her waterproof, Marjorie followed her through one of the arched doorways. and the short corridor that led to the room, that frequently in these past weeks she had thought of with so much pleasure.

CHAPTER XVII

Mr. Bonnycastle sat with his back to the door. He rose as she came in, and advancing toward her, it struck Marjorie that there was an elasticity in his step, a greater vitality in the warm grasp of his hand. and a light over his face, as from some inward joy, that was even more marked than when she had seen him last.

He seemed delighted to see her, and having placed her in one of the large chairs, drew up his own, and began to make inquiries about Rand.

"I have wanted to thank you for sending your boy over. He is a rare child! I thought his mentality and his beauty both unusual."

"He has been so well here in the country!" Marjorie said, smiling happily, and then remembering how short a time it was to last, she sighed.

"He reminds me in appearance of his father, and yet he is like you too. I saw Lawrence Wyngate once, you know. Have you heard anything more from his mother?"

"No, but for some months after my husband's death, the allowance that his mother had sent to him continued to come to us through Mrs. Wyngate's agent. A year ago, however it was discontinued. At that time, if I am not mistaken, she was in Paris."

"Did it ever strike you, Marjorie," Mr. Bonnycastle spoke slowly, "that your mother-in-law might be in close proximity to you?"

"In close proximity?" Marjorie looked puzzled.

"It was only a suggestion," Mr. Bonnycastle said hastily. "Think about it, my dear!" The shower now close at hand was heralded by a low rumble of thunder, followed by a blinding flash, and the rain began to fall in torrents against the panes of glass. Mr. Bonnycastle walked to the window and drawing up a chair for Marjorie, they sat where they could see the storm.

"You were just in time!" he exclaimed.

"When I came over this afternoon," Marjorie raised her eyes timidly to Mr. Bonnycastle's face, "I felt uneasy about you; I heard that you had been 'away'."

"Away—in a sense that I would not speak of to the world, for the world would not understand. This storm suggests a subject of unusual interest —the possible connection between electricity and psychic force. As I have suggested to you, the tendency of facts goes far to prove that they are closely connected."

"I wonder if most spiritualistic phenomena cannot be attributed to this force?" asked Marjorie, eagerly.

"To some extent, perhaps, since, as we have just said, Psychic force and electricity are so nearly allied that it is difficult to separate the two," Mr. Bonnycastle replied thoughtfully. "I think the great stumbling block of modern Spiritualism has been the effort to make a physical demonstration of a purely spiritual problem. A recent writer tells us, 'That if we would shift the plane of our attention from the fields of physical phenomena without, to that of psychical phenomena within, we would not be long in striking a trail that would lead us into the light of a scientific demonstration through a definite personal experience."

"But what proof have you that this is true?"

"The proof that I have made the 'demonstration' myself, I have had the 'personal experience.' Do not think that this came to me easily. For many years my soul was enveloped in the darkness of despair, and overcome by this awful presence. I became a wanderer over the face of the earth. The Presence of which I speak has been called by many names; the most familiar is 'Giant Despair.' Few have the courage to look into this abyss; probably not more than a million know that it exists—most of these turn from it in horror. Of those left, probably half perish, frequently by their own hand; the six or more who win out are those who have understood the writing over the Temple Door, the great 'Know Thyself,' the precept of all Mystics. To me, during this period, the tomb was the end of all, a closed door, with no crevice through which might penetrate one ray of light. In this state of mind, I went into the Great Desert, and it was there in the silence that I was given spiritual eyes and ears. The voices that I heard were at first faint, the vision often dim, but enough, I had discovered—not the closed Door that I expected, but a secret portal that might be pushed backward upon an open way."

Marjorie, with quickened breath, and slightly parted lips, listened to Mr. Bonnycastle with rapt interest.

"Is there any rule by which we may find the secret spring that opens the "Closed Door?" she asked.

"Have you ever heard of the Lost Word?" asked Mr. Bonnycastle in a low tone. "This tradition occurs in several Eastern religions, and is among the tenets of the Masonic order. It may have

originated. when the wisest men of the then known nations met at the building of the Temple of Solomon.

"This 'word' of direct instruction meant vastly more to the mystic of old than the mere Pass Word. To him it meant spiritual life and light, by it he guided his footsteps in the pathway of Truth. Finally, as an accredited 'Master of the Inner Court,' he attained that mastery of self by the exercise of which he might, at will, temporarily withdraw from the physical body, and travel whither he would, free from the limitations of the flesh, and at last receive a Master's degree."

"But is this mysterious word that gave such wonderful power ever to be restored?" cried Marjorie, overcome with awe, and trembling as if shaken by thoughts and influences too great for her to understand.

"It not only can, but will be done," replied Mr. Bonnycastle, and it seemed to Marjorie that his voice had the tone of a golden bell. "The work to that end is already well upon the way."

He sat for a moment in deep contemplation, and his face was that of one who sees "the beatific vision." To Marjorie, as she sat gazing at him, came a sudden knowledge that his life on earth was nearing its completion.

At last he broke the silence. speaking in his ordinary voice.

"There is a subject, Marjorie, that at present concerns you much more deeply than a discussion upon the higher knowledge. I fully realize, my child. how painful your position in Madame d'Holbret's house must be. In closing the door of her home to you and Rand, she is shutting out all that could make life bright to her. The evil influence

that has subjugated her strong will is ever present and ever at work, but it cannot affect you! Spiritual forces are arrayed on your side, and at no time will you really be alone. Even now I have a message for you."

"A message for me?" Marjorie exclaimed wonderingly.

Mr. Bonnycastle glanced toward the window. "Do you see now that we can hardly distinguish the outlines of the trees through the rain? In the same way our eyes are hidden so that often we cannot see the things that stare us in the face, until the time arrives when our minds have ripened. Then, when our spiritual eyes are opened, to our amazement we find that we are no longer alone, that all about us are men, women, and children of matchless grace and unrivalled loveliness. I myself found that the writer of the 'Great Work' does not exaggerate when he tells us that 'The robes and flowers that they wear far surpass anything ever beheld by mortal eye.' The day that I saw you last, my Beloved appeared to me, and when she beckoned I followed, I know not where, but not to remain. This is not the first time that my spirit has returned and taken up its abode in the flesh. This time it was to bring a message to you, and from your mother."

"My—mother!"

"Yes. Here is her portrait!" Mr. Bonnycastle drew aside the curtain from before the niche, and Marjorie gazed in rapture on her mother's face.

"Marjorie, your mother was the one love of my life," he said softly. "Through a misunderstanding we were separated. She married your father, and, as you know, her mortal life was brief. She bids me tell you that the problem that now con-

fronts you will be solved in an unexpected way. You are to cast no backward glance upon the path, but to look forward into a life of contentment and peace."

The curtain fell to its place in heavy folds, and for several minutes neither Mr. Bonnycastle or Marjorie spoke.

At last Marjorie felt she must go. Her mind was filled with questions that could only be answered by solitary thought.

"It is too late to go alone!" Mr. Bonnycastle said, ringing the bell hastily. "Andrew Markham will walk over with you. I expect to leave here soon, Marjorie, to go to the Holy Land. Yes, in the flesh this time!" he said smiling. "I regret leaving now on your account, but I have left instructions in regard to you with these loyal Scotch servants and friends of mine, Andrew and Janet Markham. I shall see you again before I leave."

For a moment Mr. Bonnycastle's manner had lost its usual composure. Then again serene, radiant, he regarded Marjorie with a tenderness so paternal that it brought tears to her eyes. Standing at the front entrance she found the Scotchman waiting for her and looking up at the sky.

"The wind ha' settled!" he remarked abruptly, and they walked in silence to the "Shelter."

CHAPTER XVIII

An Indian summer of golden sunshine and blue skies was followed by days in which the sky had taken on a gray leaden hue. Above the tall red chimneys of the "Shelter," the swallows no longer circled, and in the open fireplaces pine logs crackled and blazed, casting shadows upon the paneled walls and making the house fragrant with the delicious aroma of pine.

Although Marjorie had notified her employer that she would not remain with her, the weeks had slipped by, and she still found herself an inmate of her home. This had been brought about through various means. In the first place, the day after the departure of Decimus and the revelation that had come to Marjorie in regard to Appolina, followed by Madame d'Holbret's accusation of herself, Baron d'Holbret had taken a hasty departure, declaring that his presence was required at once in his native land. After this, although it was impossible for Madame to conceal her bitter animosity, her manner toward Marjorie underwent a singular transformation. She was not only conciliatory, but she made constant excuses of work that delayed her secretary's departure, and Marjorie, consoling herself that this hostility did not extend to Rand, whom she had seen her employer frequently watch with furtive interest, decided not to hurry away until she found some suitable place to which they might go. But remembering the old adage, "When

the Greeks send gifts, beware," she remained with misgivings.

Since the morning of the scene in the library when she had been accused by Madame d'Holbret, Marjorie had seen Mrs. Clay but once. Then her old friend, with every expression of hurt pride, had confided to Marjorie gossip in the village that could only have emanated, she insisted, from insinuations cast abroad by the Baroness in which, naturally, she did not incriminate her husband. Under any circumstances Mrs. Clay said, Marjorie owed it, not only to herself, but to her friends, to tell all she knew about this "veiled woman" who had been stealing out at dawn from the "Shelter," and whose identity she did not deny that she had recognized.

When Marjorie had declined to do this, Mrs. Clay reminded her that in every community there were women, so called "good women," certainly strict church members, who, while they would look with horror upon a man who took a woman's life, without the slightest compunction, over a cup of tea, would take what was far more precious to her —her character. After this warning, Mrs. Clay lifted her skirts preparatory to leaving, with the manner of one who cast from her all farther responsibility in the matter.

Much to her relief, Marjorie had not again seen Appolina—who, impatient of control, had rarely listened to her mother's suggestions. Now, however, she had found it agreeable to do so, and Mrs. Clay—a sweet woman, even a noble one when a line of duty had been pointed out, but a little narrow—impressed it upon her daughter she had better not go to the "Shelter" until some of the gossip had died down, and the general character of

the d'Holbret household was better understood in the neighborhood. And as Marjorie came to realize Appolina's withdrawal and what it signified—since it was voluntary—of her cowardice and of Mrs. Clay's unowned but very substantial fear of contamination, it took all her native sanity of character and mental poise to keep her humor from being tinged with cynicism.

Baron d'Holbret's absence was only a brief one, and in a few weeks an advance telegram announced his impending return. The telegram was followed by three imposing looking individuals, a chef, a butler, and a lady's maid.

A grand piano next made its appearance. and after this a stud of blooded riding horses, beside numerous barrels and boxes of provisions for the table.

Marjorie watched. with secret amusement, the expression of Madame d'Holbret as she signed checks for these purchases made by her husband, evidently without consulting her. The sarcastic smile with which she had eyed the lady's maid, and the chef, was changed into grim humor on the arrival of the grand piano, but when she signed a check for twenty thousand dollars, made out in her name, to be paid for the stud of horses, she fell into a state approaching collapse. In consequence of this rash expenditure, for several days the household was reduced to a condition bordering upon famine, and the chef was on the eve of departure, when the master of the house himself made his appearance.

Baron d'Holbret brought with him several men friends whom he had met on his travels, and to whom he had held out the prospect of fox hunts, social festivities, and of seeing the South in its

most hospitable aspect. And the house, now filled with guests, presented a very different aspect, and had an atmosphere of gaiety which had been lacking during the regime of Madame d'Holbret. When she had become in a measure reconciled, under her husband's influence, to his large expenditures, which he persuaded her were necessary in order to maintain her important position in the community, she began to be entertained and interested by the festivities which were constantly in progress. Among d'Holbret's friends was a young Frenchman named Gaspard de Bretigny, who paid assiduous court to her, on all occasions, and admired everything she did and said with Gallic fervor. This was agreeable to her, and d'Holbret, too, had never been more devoted, nor did he take the slightest notice of her secretary, Mrs. Wyngate.

At the breakfast table one morning soon after his arrival, he asked Marjorie, distantly, if she would be good enough to try the new piano, and make some selections for an impromptu musicale which was to take place that evening at "The Shelters." The musicians had been engaged to come out from the city. During the morning there was to be a "fox-hunt," so the day would be full of pleasurable excitement.

"The 'meet' must not be too early, Francis," his wife reminded him. "Mr. Jasper is coming at eleven o'clock on a matter of business which requires your presence."

"So he is," said the Baron, indifferently. "There is no great hurry about that, though, Charlotte," and smiling at her affectionately he bent to kiss her hand, then gave a quick glance at Marjorie to see if she had heard what the Baroness had said.

The other guests had gone out into the garden

after breakfast, but Baron d'Holbret and de Bretigny had lingered on the gallery to smoke and talk for a few moments.

"La Secretaire, de Madame votre femme, cet une jeune femme charmante," Marjorie heard de Bretigny say. "And much too beautiful to be in such a position."

"Do you think so?" said the Baron, lazily, as he looked through a magazine. which he had picked up from a table. ',She is extremely studious, and performs her duties remarkably well, my wife tells me. But, my dear fellow, you must wait until the hunt to see a real Tennessee beauty! I will promise you much pleasure in her society."

The two young men sauntered down the steps into the garden to join the others, laughing and talking gaily in French.

A little later Marjorie went into the music room and ran her fingers lightly over the keyboard of the beautiful piano. Its tone was perfect, and she promised herself at least a half hour's enjoyment. She was looking over the music at her disposal, with pleasant anticipation, when she felt that someone was gazing at her. d'Holbret had silently entered the room, and in his eyes was an erpression that made her tremble. There could be no doubt of his feeling for her, and when they were alone he did not attempt to conceal it. Her hands fell to her lap. and she looked up at him with marked coldness, her face pale and firm.

He was about to seize her hand, when Rand entered the room, holding in his hand a katydid. In the big locust tree outside the window, this slender green insect had been conducting its familiar argument, "katydid, katy didn't," and Rand, having captured it, was examining it under a mag-

nifying glass that Mr. Bonnycastle had given him. The Baron sank disgustedly into a chair near the piano, and began to look through some music; but in reality he was looking at Rand. with an enigmatic expression.

Rand immediately went to his mother's side to show her his prize, and to ask for its story, while the Baron looked on with inscrutable eyes.

"As the story goes, Rand," Marjorie, dressed in a soft white morning dress that showed the grace of her slender figure, turned on the piano stool as she spoke, "Plato. a Greek philosopher and naturalist, tells us that 'Before the Muses lived the cicadas were men on earth who so loved song and singing, that to lose no time from it they left off eating and so died, but in death they became cicadas'

"I think this one was a tall, slender lady, Mama, (like Miss Araminta), who dressed in a pale green dress, and when the katydids gave concerts, she played on a harp."

Baron d'Holbret laid down his paper, laughing. "Rand is right," he declared. "According to the Tuscan peasants the cicadas were maids, not men, who forgot to eat. The *cavaletta,* the cicada is called in Tuscany. Wagner, Mrs. Wyngate? I cannot believe it!" The Baron turned toward the piano. "Wagner is bad for youths, fatal to women. Nietzche compares some of Wagner's music to 'subtle poison.' "

"Nietzche was incapable of appreciating Wagner's music," Marjorie replied with some spirit.

"I would suggest that we have something light for the musicale, a selection from one of the late operas," he continued, and rising, he walked over to the piano and stood turning over the leaves of

music, his back to the door. "For my part, I am old-fashioned enough to like 'Faust,' Gounod's music breathes of passion," he continued, in a low tone, "whether it is secular or religious."

Marjorie began to play softly, in the hope of making a diversion.

"The modern operas are a little too advanced in some ways for a rural entertainment," she said hurriedly. "If you will trust my taste, I think I can arrange a satisfactory programme, without taking you from your guests any longer."

Baron d'Holbret was about to speak, when the sound of horses hoofs was heard, galloping up the gravel road that led from the gate to the house. Rising, Marjorie walked to the window, followed closely by her companion.

Appolina, with several gentlemen in attendance, had arrived for the fox hunt. In her green riding habit, showing admirably her perfect figure. and with her glowing cheeks, she made a charming picture, and in response to her smiles and beckoning hand, Baron d'Holbret sprang through the open window, and hastened to her side. As he drew near her Appolina pouted her red lips.

"Aren't you coming now?" she exclaimed, seeing that he was not dressed for the hunt. Leaning toward her, he said something in a low tone, then added more audibly that a lawyer was expected, and he would have to be present, but for not one unnecessary moment would he absent himself from her side. He would join her at the meet he declared, in a very short time. As he spoke, his hand. unseen by the others, closed upon Appolina's, and they exchanged a glance. Then, turning to one of the other gentlemen who had come to

join them, Appolina made a motion of kicking out at him with her pretty feet.

"Go away, Tom, I don't like you to-day," she exclaimed pettishly.

"Not the first time I have been kicked by you, Appolina," he said dryly.

"Yes, even on her wedding journey——" one of the others began, but did not finish his sentence.

"What! Was Appolina ever conventional enough to take a wedding journey?" asked a tall, cynical looking young man.

"So she says," replied the first speaker, one of Appolina's earliest admirers, teasingly. "Shall I tell them, Appolina? All I know is that on her return she said that *she* had had a very pleasant time, but that the bridegroom, George Blair, seemed very sad, and she reckoned he had never recovered from the loss of his first wife."

"Stop guying, Jack, you're mean." Appolina exclaimed, not joining in the laugh that followed this sally. She gave a lash with her whip that Bonny Kate evidently resented as an insult for she reared suddenly, with a dangerous light in her beautiful eyes. This gave Appolina an excellent opportunity to show her horsemanship, which she made full use of, while her little coterie looked on admiringly.

At this moment de Bretigny and his companions emerged from the house, faultlessly arrayed for the hunt, and mounted their horses, which were pawing impatiently at the door. Baron d'Holbret introduced them to Appolina and her retinue, while Marjorie stood quietly at the window, a little apart from the gay scene.

"Mon cher, Francois!" cried de Bretigny, enthu-

siastically. "Mon Dieu! N'est ce pas—Olympe, et Diane, la Deisse de la chasse, aves nous?"

"Yes, there *are* Goddesses in Tennessee, and *this* is Diana!" replied the Baron, looking directly into Appolina's eyes. She dropped them for a moment, then turned gaily toward Marjorie.

"*You* would not come, of course, you busy girl," she said, throwing an airy kiss. "You could not possibly leave Rand, or Madame d'Holbret." Marjorie could not help smiling at the mimicry of her own sedate tones, and waved her hand in farewell.

"Hear the baying of the hounds!" cried Appolina, in sudden excitement. "Old Jiles has arrived with the pack. We must be off."

O, it's up at the break of day, Away!
It's up and into the saddle and crack, Away!
Away!
We follow the hounds at the break of day, away!
The steeds go clattering over the plains, away!

Bonny Kate was only too ready to start, and dashed down the avenue at a fleet pace.

Following Appolina, the gentlemen sprang into their saddles. A gay "Halloo! Halloo!" burst from the party, as they galloped away.

As Marjorie stood at the window, she saw them reappear, soon after, in the distance, ascending a high hill, their figures outlined against the sky. Baron d'Holbret re-entered the music room, but he was seated in a chair, apparently engrossed in a music book which he had taken up, when Marjorie turned to see Madam d'Holbret standing inside the room.

CHAPTER XIX

Madame d'Holbret stood for some minutes in the doorway, silently watching them, and then came forward, her head well up in the air, and shaking a little. Her manner showed that something had occurred to anger her recently. Behind her came an elderly, professional looking man, whom Marjorie recognized as Mr. Jasper, a lawyer, and one of her early acquaintances. He shook hands with her cordially, and as her employer's haughty glance rested upon Rand and herself, she would have left the room had the lawyer not detained them.

"As Dr. Pell, who was to act as one of the witnesses to this document, has not arrived, Madame," he turned to the Baroness, "perhaps Mrs. Wyngate will be so kind as to act in that capacity."

"My secretary?" she raised her brows, and there was a scornful inflection in her voice. "What possible interest could she and her son have in the matter? I consider it most unsuitable for them to be present."

"In making a will," declared the lawyer, "it is always wise to have among the witnesses entirely disinterested parties, so that if any question comes up afterwards, they can testify to this fact, and so strengthen the will. Dr. Pell has probably been detained by the necessities of his profession, or he would certainly be here by this time."

The Baroness remained silent a moment, as if debating the question in her mind. Looking up

suddenly at Baron d'Holbret, she observed that he was not altogether in accordance with the lawyer's views, and this decided her.

"I believe you are right," she said. "Let us conclude this matter at once. I am weary of this discussion."

"Certainly, certainly," said Mr. Jasper, affably. "No offense, I trust!" In the usual professional drone, he began, according to custom to read the will to the testator, and Marjorie soon realized that the whole of Madame d'Holbret's large estate ("since by a dispensation of Providence, she had been left without heirs") was devised and bequeathed to her husband, Baron d'Holbret. That gentleman sat with frowning brows, his head on his hand. his eyes intently fixed upon his wife. Was he endeavoring to read that Sphinx-like face, and was he succeeding? Marjorie could not tell.

The lawyer's voice ceased, and he gave a quick glance about the room as he removed his spectacles.

"I hear carriage wheels," said Baron d'Holbret, "perhaps Dr. Pell is here now, and it will not be necessary to trouble Mrs. Wyngate."

"Who is to be the second witness?" demanded the lawyer.

As he spoke, the Baroness, who sat where she could see from the windows, rose in evident agitation. A handsome carriage and horses had stopped before the door, and from it descended, not Dr. Pell, but someone for whom she felt that even so important a matter as a will could wait, for it was no other person than Mr. Robin Bonnycastle. A servant walked by his side up to the door, but this was merely a formality, since, but for his snowy locks, he looked like a young man. His step was

elastic, his clear eyes were illumined as if from a light within, and his skin was as fair and pink as that of a child. The day being cold, he wore a long black overcoat, lined with some beautiful fur that came up about his throat.

"Shall we continue, madame?" asked Mr. Jasper, deferentially. "It is only a matter of a few moments, fifteen or twenty at the most."

"No," replied the Baroness decisively. "I will receive Mr. Bonnycastle at once. Mrs. Wyngate, will you see that my servants are attending him properly?"

Marjorie arose with alacrity, and went out into the hall, followed by Rand, who walked quietly behind her. The Baroness involuntarily looked at him, and a little more expression came into her face for a moment, then was sternly repressed.

Mr. Bonnycastle was just entering the door and warmly greeted Marjorie and Rand as they came toward him. "You are both well?" he said, with a keen glance at their serious faces.

As they entered the music room, the Baroness rose, and held out her hand with unusual graciousness. "It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, Mr. Bonnycastle," she said suavely. "Allow me to present my husband, Baron d'Holbret. Mr. Jasper, I presume, you know."

In the formality of the introduction. Mr. Bonnycastle's glance passed over the Baron almost without recognition, as he continued to bow with courtly grace over the hand the Baroness had extended to him.

"To meet Mr. Bonnycastle is a pleasure coveted by many, but accorded to few," she explained, in a little flutter of excitement.

"You do me too much honor, Madame," said her

guest, "I regret that I can only tarry for a moment. I am about to take a long journey, most unexpectedly, and have come to pay my respects to you, and to say farewell to my dear friends, Mrs. Wyngate and Rand."

He paused with a smile, then continued: "But am I not interrupting some grave occasion?" he turned to the old lawyer. who bowed, in a deprecating way.

The Baroness drew herself up a little stiffly, and replied with manifest constraint: "We are contemplating the signing of my will. Since the death of my son, and later of his son, I have found this necessary."

"Then, I am indeed intruding!" Mr. Bonnycastle bestowed upon the Baroness one of his most charming smiles. "For the making of a will demands long and serious consideration, whether the amount involved be large or small."

"I agree with you entirely," answered the Baroness, a curious look coming into her eyes. "And since you have honored us, Mr. Bonnycastle, I think I will not sign my will to-day."

Baron d'Holbret looked up quickly, but his wife's face was even more impassive than usual. As for Mr. Bonnycastle, he was gazing intently at a piece of jewelry that the Baroness wore, and seemed to have forgotten about the will for the time being.

"I am greatly interested," he said quietly, "in that exquisite pin you wear. Italian, is it not? I made quite a study of miniatures in my youth."

The Baroness unloosened the pin, and handed it to him.

"It is a miniature of my son, by a famous artist,"

she replied. "You will see that the workmanship is unusually fine. The expense of these small paintings is incredible, and I prize this one very much."

Mr. Bonnycastle examined the miniature carefully, and then glanced up at Rand, who was standing near him.

"Curious!" he said meditatively, his gaze again resting upon the miniature. "Do you know, Madame, I see a decided resemblance between this painting and my little friend here?"

The Baroness looked almost appalled for a moment, then stretched out her hand for the miniature, fastening it with agitated fingers.

"That is very strange," she said, in a low, choked voice.

"Is not our distinguished visitor accredited with seeing many things not visible to the eyes of ordinary beings?" There was a world of meaning in Francis d'Holbret's tone, but Mr. Bonnycastle gave no sign of having heard him. He remained for some time, skillfully covering the Baroness' agitation by the interest of his talk, and not only his hostess, but Dr. Pell who had bustled in, murmuring something about "a matter of life and death, nine pounds at the very least, and poor as Job's turkey, of course," listened with delight as he talked of life in the Orient, and of recent scientific discoveries.

The beneficiary of the unsigned will seemed alone to have escaped the spell, but if he felt any impatience, he was clever enough to conceal it.

"Since we have put off this business matter for the present," he said, carelessly, "I think I must join my friends, who are awaiting me at the 'meet.' I am sure Mr. Bonnycastle will excuse me."

"Good hunting, sir," said Mr. Bonnycastle, with a quizzical smile.

"That they will have, I am sure," declared the Baroness, and the sarcasm of her tone was not lost upon her husband. "He delights in that sport, and I know that some of his friends," she paused, "are anxiously expecting him."

Without making any reply, but bowing low to his wife and Mr. Bonnycastle, Baron d'Holbret left the room. He realized now that his wife had seen from her window his pronounced flirtation with Appolina, and it was this that had angered her.

After his departure, Mr. Bonnycastle only remained a few minutes, and then said good-bye to the Baroness, promising that he would send her a letter from India. With Marjorie and Rand on each side, their hands clasped in his, he walked to the carriage. Marjorie watched the carriage out of sight, and then brushing tears from her eyes, she went slowly back to the house.

How good he had been to them! His visit was not only of ceremony, but one of affection, and he had wished to show others the estimation in which he held them. And, beside this, in the scene that had just been enacted in the Baroness's music-room, Marjorie felt that in some intangible way, too subtle for her as yet to fathom, Mr. Bonnycastle had been a silent witness for Rand and for herself.

CHAPTER XX

The hour for the musicale at the "Shelter" had arrived, and in the long drawing-room, thrown open for the first time in many years, the polished, waxed floor and silver candelabra reflected a soft radiance from innumerable candles.

Besides several guests and the musicians, a caterer and waiters had arrived from the city near by. The Baroness herself, however, superintended the lighting of the house, and as her figure gradually emerged from the darkness of the drawing-room, the light touched softly the rich folds of her silk gown, and an exquisitely carved cameo pin, that her husband had brought her from abroad, and that she had fastened at her throat.

She was still a little lame, and leaned heavily on her cane as she passed slowly through the spacious room, her eyes lingering with haughty satisfaction upon the handsome old furniture, the rare paintings and pieces of bric-a-brac.

The silver candelabra and the oval mirrors, with sconces on each side, from which there fell long crystal pendants, seemed, however, to be the especial objects of her interest. Examining these antiques, bought in with the house, Madame's face relaxed from the severity that characterized it, and one realized that with her fine head and classic features, that she might have been called unusually handsome had it not been for the strange scar that the household at the "Shelter" had come to

watch with almost tragic interest, since it seemed to be a sort of danger signal that gave warning of its owner's passionate moods.

She had not noticed that the candelabras were marked with the initial of the former owner. This was a little awkward, but they were solid silver, and she stood admiring, seemingly loath to move on, when, shivering, she realized that the room, closed for many months, was chilly. She was reminded of a very beautiful old lace scarf that she possessed and that had been laid away for some time. Striking her cane sharply against the floor, she moved away now in hurried search of Miss Araminta, who, with a lighted candle in her hand, ascended to the attic to open a certain cedar chest in which it had been stored. Before her son's death, on his return form a trip abroad, he had brought her this scarf of Point de Venise, a rare pattern made for a lady of rank. She recalled now, with a throb of the old affection for her only son, his appearance, and the charm of his manner, as he had folded the scarf about her shoulders, relating an amusing experience incidental to his securing this treasure for her, that some day, he declared, she was to give it to his wife. Fastened to the scarf there had been a card upon which her son had written his name, and beneath, in her own peculiar chirography, she had written her own name, and "For my *son's* wife."

The lace scarf had been stored away and never worn, for her husband had died and not long after there had come, what was to her, the tragedy of her son's marriage.

It struck Madame d'Holbret that Miss Araminta had remained in the attic longer than seemed necessary. She rose, with an impatient gesture, and

stood waiting at the foot of the attic stairs as she saw the elderly spinster slowly descending the steps, the box in her hands. She was so pale that even Madame d'Holbret, who, probably very rarely thought of her as a human being at all, was struck by it. and having explained that she had searched over the chest before finding the box Madame fitted a tiny key that she had worn for many years on her bunch, and pressing back the lid, gazed —into an empty box!

Her astonishment was so great that for several minutes she did not speak. and then she turned toward Miss Aramiata. "Since a few days ago I spoke of this scarf to you, when no one else was present, I hold you responsible," she said, with icy coldness.

With trembling fingers, Miss Araminta took the empty box from Madame's hands. but made no reply.

"I ask you, Araminta, if there was any one present beside yourself, when I spoke of this lace, its unusual value, and where I had laid it away?" Madame d'Holbret's voice was not only sharp, but beneath her glance it was impossible to resort to the slightest subterfuge.

"No—that is, I don't think so," Miss Araminta's reply was so low that it was difficult to catch her words.

Madame d'Holbret heard her, however, and as she did so over her face there passed a singular transformation. "I recall now that Mrs. Wyngate was present, and so do you, I see," she said harshly. "Yes, it was this Marjorie Wyngate who, from some strange coincidence, bore the same name as the daughter-in-law whom she had despised, and whose child reminded her constantly of her own

son in his infancy. The scene in the library not many days before came before her, the passionate glance with which her husband had looked into the eyes of the young woman, an employee in her service. She had every reason to believe that this Mrs. Wyngate had stolen, not his love—she realized that he had never given this to her—but his allegiance. Now HER hour had come!

Her expression of elation was so great that Baron d'Holbret, coming into the room, was struck by it as he offered his arm to his wife to escort her to the drawing-room, and his manner became a little absent, speculating as to what had brought about the smile, almost of triumph, with which she had received him.

Miss Araminta stood watching them until they crossed the hall and, joined by several guests, entered the drawing-room, and then she did a very strange thing. Locking the door, and looking fearfully around—this fragile, faded maiden lady, who had grown gray and broken in her thirty years service for her patroness and whose integrity was so beyond doubt that it had never been questioned—drew from beneath a loose jacket that she wore a package, done up in blue paper, from which there fell, as she opened it, a lace scarf of such exquisite texture that it seemed difficult to believe that it had been wrought by human hands. As the yards of lace fell over the faded satin gown in which Miss Araminta had arrayed herself for the evening's entertainment, a smile came to her lips. She held it up admiring it and then unlocked the door, and again looking fearfully out into the hall, she almost ran up the stairs to the room occupied by Marjorie Wyngate.

CHAPTER XXI

Marjorie stood before the long pier glass that always reminded her of her mother, preparatory to making a hasty toilette for the evening. She had been detained down stairs by Doctor Pell, who had stopped to tell her of the fox chase, and the accident that had occurred. Mrs. Clay's beautiful blooded mare, "Bonny Kate," had fallen as Appolina was taking a flying leap over a stone wall, and it was feared that the mare would have to be shot. Marjorie was so preoccupied with the thought of distress that this would occasion Mrs. Clay that she dressed herself somewhat absently, in the heavy silk of ivory whiteness with touches of lace at the throat and sleeves that she had taken from her trunk. Rand, standing by, and so pretty in a blue suit, with a boutonniere, that Marjorie stopped several times in her toilette to kiss him, when drawing her down to him, he pinned on the braids that formed a coronet about her graceful head, a bunch of red holly berries, and green leaves. As Miss Araminta opened the door she stopped with an exclamation of pleasure upon her lips.

"You are charming! You need but one thing: it is chilly in the parlors, could you not find something light like lace you could throw about you?"

"That reminds me of a scarf that I had not thought of for years!" Marjorie said, smiling.

"We haven't a moment," Miss Araminta replied,

hastily throwing the lace scarf about Marjorie's shoulders. "The musicale is about to begin, and you will be too late for your number."

Marjorie glanced at Miss Araminta, wondering at her agitation; she had no time, however, to reply, and clasping Rand's hand, they hurried down to the drawing-room.

Although most of their guests had arrived, the Baroness and her husband stood near the center of the room. While Baron d'Holbret could easily have been taken for his wife's son, they were unusually striking in their appearance, and this disparity in their ages doubtless only added to the interest with which all eyes were turned upon them. Nothing more heightened this interest, however, than the report that the young man who had married their elderly hostess, was a French Baron, and with the delightful adulation with which our great American commonwealth bows down before a title, the whole countryside would have flocked to the home of the Baroness, had it received invitations.

Marjorie, with Rand close to her, took her seat with the musicians back of the grand piano, surrounded by palms and potted plants that almost hid them from sight. She spoke only once, then, the Baroness for a moment having left the room, d'Holbret bent down toward Marjorie, his eyes burning with passionate admiration into her own. What he said, no one could hear, or will ever know, but certain it is that as Marjorie replied, he started back from her, growing as white as if she had struck him with a whip across his face.

"I take that as a challenge," he said bitterly, and lifting a glove that had fallen from her hand to the floor, he secreted it hurriedly, and passed on.

It was Marjorie's turn now to play, and taking

her seat at the piano, she chose for her first selection, "The Chase" (Die Jagd), by Rheinberger, then a Trantelle, and from this she fell into the tender strains of Wagner's "Traume," the theme, into which she threw a pathos of which she was unaware, recurring as an insistent hope that strove toward fulfilment. She was startled into sudden consciousness of her surroundings by an exclamation, followed by a low murmur, and as her hands fell from the piano she turned quickly and saw the Baroness standing near her. With one hand she held up a corner of the lace scarf. "Allow me to remark," she said in an undertone—but of biting irony, "upon the similarity of the scarf worn by Mrs. Wyngate, and one that I have lately *lost*—I think she has overlooked a card that may throw some light upon the name of the owner."

Bewildered, Marjorie arose from the piano. She was conscious that the eyes of the company were turned upon her. For a minute she stood, the lights from the silver candelabras falling softly upon her, showing the purity of her upturned face, and her slender figure about which the scarf had entwined itself. She saw Rand's brave little figure as he stepped before her, and then a breath soft as a zephyr blown from a celestial sphere, passed across her face and she was reminded of Mr. Bonnycastle's words, "there are spiritual forces arrayed on your side." She felt something touch her hand and saw a card she had not before noticed, fastened upon the scarf. Taking it up she read slowly: "Charlotte Wyngate," and then in the chirography that she now knew so well, "from her son—Lawrence Wyngate."

Madame d'Holbret, before her marriage then, had been named Wyngate, and since the card read from

"your son," her, Marjorie Wyngate's husband, Lawrence Wyngate, had been Madame d'Holbret's son. The whole truth, like a revelation suddenly flashed across her. She became conscious now of the people in the room, of the many eyes turned expectantly upon her, awaiting her reply.

"The manner in which the scarf came into my possession is easily explained, Madame," she said calmly. "From the card attached to the lace, however, I see that it was presented to you by your son, Lawrence Wyngate, who was my husband, and (with an expression of ineffable tenderness and pride Marjorie turned toward Rand) this child's father."

Rand, his eyes beaming now that his mother was happy again, unconsciously held out his little hand. Madame d'Holbret made an instinctive movement as if she would take it, then turning in a dazed way toward Baron d'Holbret, she cried: "Is this true, Francis?" As she spoke she would have fainted had not her husband caught her in his arms, and then a convulsive trembling fell upon her face and limbs.

"Non, non, Ma Chere!" the Baron cried, catching his wife in his arms. "It is not true. Elle est une imposteur!"

Turning to the company, he spoke in a louder tone: "We regret that the music has been interrupted, but Mrs. Wyngate is laboring under a delusion. We will try to believe that she is sincere, since she has probably discovered that through something of a coincidence, her husband bore the same name as that of my wife's son, and, it may be, that his wife and child, who died a year ago, may also have had names that were similar." He turned now toward Miss Araminta, who like a

wraith, but with menace in her eyes, had risen in a far corner of the room. She evidently wished to make some explanation, but with a laugh and a shrug of the shoulder, and touching his head in a way that might signify to the company that Miss Araminta was not mentally responsible, Baron d'Holbret signaled to the musicians, and the ladies and gentlemen, with an effort to regain their composure, turned to listen to the strains of "Madame Butterfly."

Seated back of the palms, with Rand's hand clasped within her own, it seemed hours to Marjorie before the musicale came to a close, and the guests, having made their adieux, were driven away.

With Rand asleep, resting closely against her, they were at last left alone. After a while some one crept softly down the stairs and put out the lights. Still Marjorie did not move. The silence was so intense that she could hear the tumultuous beating of her heart as it beat for her boy, her brave, beautiful boy, who would now at last come into his own! As he opened his eyes, she gathered him in her arms, and together they made their way through the darkened house up the stairway. It was only as they passed the door of the room occupied by Baron d'Holbret that she shuddered.

CHAPTER XXII

The morning after the musicale at the "Shelter," the household slept late. At dawn, Marjorie Wyngate, who had not retired, knelt in a loose white negligee, her heavy hair hanging about her shoulders, before a small cabinet from which she had drawn forth a package of old letters, souvenirs of her short married life. From these she selected one written to her husband by his mother. and carefully spreading it before her, she noted how little change the years had made in the peculiar chirography that distinguished Madame d'Holbret.

A line of pale light gliding into the room, suddenly lengthened itself into one longer and grayer than the others. and looking up, somewhat startled, Marjorie saw, standing in the doorway—Miss Araminta!

With her finger on her lips, and glancing fearfully around, Miss Araminta softly closed the door.

"Do you blame me, my dear?" she asked, anxiously, sinking into the chair that Marjorie drew up for her.

"Was there no other way of bringing about the revelation as to our identity, if that is what you wished; one where I might not have been so cruelly incriminated before the public?" Marjorie replied.

Miss Araminta leaned back wearily in her chair, and an unsteady little sigh escaped from her lips.

"Our best laid plans rarely turn out as we expect! I hoped that Madame would realize by this time the fraud that has been perpetrated upon her by the Baron d'Holbret, and as the truth dawned upon her, her pride in Rand would be so excited that before that large company she would acknowledge him—she would liked to have done so, he was so sweet as he held his hand out to her!" A smile, faint and evanescent, suddenly transformed Miss Araminta from a gray shadow into one who had known youth. "Of course, when your identity was established, it would have been easy for me to explain that I took the lace scarf and placed it about you. Indeed, I expected to lead up to the revelation concerning your and Rand's relationship to Madame. Baron d'Holbret has been studying the family history a little of late, however; he has doubtless found that next to Rand, I am Madame's next of kin; that her son, Lawrence Wyngate, your husband, was the dearest object of my life. He realized that I knew too much, and when I would have explained, he discredited my sanity before the company; he would not allow me to speak."

Marjorie rose and taking one of Rand's hands that had escaped from beneath the coverlet, she kissed it and made it warm again before she spoke.

How long has Madame d'Holbret been under the influence of this man?"

"Not more than two years, I should think," Miss Araminta replied thoughtfully. She is a woman of strong will and the Baron has not found it so easy as he expected to carry out his plans."

"Madame d'Holbret has also, as you know, violent prejudices. Her feeling against you, however, Marjorie, you must realize might be expected. She loved your father, their wedding day had been

fixed. He openly jilted her to marry your mother, a beautiful young Southern woman, who was striving to retrieve the fallen fortunes of her family by singing in concert in New York City. Afterward, Charlotte Vosburgh (Madame d'Holbret is of Dutch descent), in a fit of pique, married Mr. Wyngate. He was a lovable man. She never cared for him, however, and in after years, when her only son was grown and wished to marry you, a daughter of the man who had treated her with such contumely, her opposition was intense. Realizing his mother's bitterness, Lawrence made me his confidant. He sent me a picture of you, and always with some doubts as to the representations made by Baron d'Holbret in regard to the death in an epidemic of Lawrence's wife and child, when I saw you I felt sure that I was not mistaken."

"If I had only known this before!" Marjorie exclaimed. "I would have explained what I considered the unaccountable prejudice my mother-in-law manifested toward me. Why did not Lawrence tell me?"

"Lawrence was very reticent," Miss Araminta said, gently, "and he may not have known. I do not suppose you ever heard him speak of his friend at Oxford?"

"Do you know what became of the man, F. Talbert, who was with Lawrence at the time of the accident that caused his death?" Marjorie asked quickly.

"Did it ever strike you that Talbert was a myth? I have a theory in regard to it." Miss Araminta regarded Marjorie with something inscrutible in her eyes. "At the time of Lawrence's death and many months afterward. I was ill in a hospital. When I left it and returned to my cousin, Mrs. Wyngate

at that time, I found that she had fallen completely under the influences of Baron d'Holbret. She soon after married him, and now, as you know, she sleeps and wakes, comes and goes, as he wills."

The mention of Talbert recalled to Marjorie her vision at the time of her husband's death—the two men and the dog, the ravine, the struggle on the swaying bridge, and the fatal thrusting of one of the combatants over the frail railing into the abyss.

She rose, shivering as from cold. Miss Araminta had risen also, and stood looking at Rand, who unconscious of all this tragedy in the world of grown-ups, smiled back at her in his innocent sleep. "When surely a fragrance seems to exude from these fresh young souls."

The grayness of the morning closed about Marjorie after Miss Araminta left her. She sat still, too tired to think, whne aroused by a summon to see Mrs. Clay, who was waiting in the library to see her.

Marjorie found her old friend full of the excitement felt in the countryside over the revelation made at the concert the evening before in regard to the identity of Marjorie and Rand as the daughter-in-law, and grandchild, of the Baroness d'Holbret.

"It seems past comprehension that we should have been so blind," Mrs. Clay began. "Mr. Clay told me to tell you that as your advocate, he is no longer a 'free trader,' but favors 'protection' and will begin by placing a heavy 'duty' upon every wealthy woman who goes out of our country to marry a penniless foreigner. The Baron is, of course. not what he should be, but we must con-

fess that he is distinguished looking and has most ingratiating manners. He has been kind to Appolina." Two small crimson spots deepened in Mrs. Clay's cheeks, and she then drew herself up with hauteur. "Of course no slander could ever come near our old and honored name. A name that came down from William the Conqueror and has distinguished itself also in American history. Sometimes I fear though," Mrs. Clay laughed nervously, "that my naughty child is becoming too audacious. Will you believe it. She declared she has been slandered for not spending more time with her husband, and she intends going to a fancy dress ball in the city to-morrow evening as a 'teddy bear' that she may 'hug her enemies.'"

"I can imagine then that Appolina's embraces will be of a vigorous nature," Marjorie replied smiling.

"Of course you will not stay here, Marjorie," Mrs. Clay said, rising to leave. "Mr. Clay would not hear of such a thing. He told me to give you some inspiring words from American history suitable to the occasion, but I cannot remember just now what they were."

"I have already made arrangements to leave," Marjorie replied quickly, amused at the slight expression of constraint in Mrs. Clay's voice. "Andrew Markham says that Rand only needs 'the fraish air o' a fairm to make a mon o' him.' They leave early to-morrow, and Andrew and Janet are delighted at the prospect of our going with them. They have a farm across the river from the western part of the state, near a large cotton plantation owned by Mr. Bonnycastle. Their little home is in the pine woods, and I think it will be good for Rand. I also will enjoy it for a few weeks, and I

can decide what is best for me to do. I appreciate your kind invitation, however,, and that of Mr. Clay. Tell him that I thank him and shall certainly see him before we leave."

After Mrs. Clay had left her, Marjorie lingered for a few minutes in the conservatory, enjoying the beauty and fragrance of a few delicate plants, that had been brought in from the garden. She had turned to leave when her attention was arrested by a faint sound, and looking more closely, she saw, seated in a nook back of several large palms and potted plants—the Baron d'Holbret. As their eyes met, he rose to his feet.

"So our sweet Mistress Wyngate means to deprive us soon of her society?" he asked, a faint sarcastic smile in his handsome eyes and curving lips.

"Since the scheming of those who would deprive my young son of his rights here, make it impossible to do otherwise." Marjorie replied.

Baron d'Holbret shrugged his shoulders and flicked the ashes from his cigar.

"On every subject there are different points of view. For instance, from your flattering conversation a few minutes ago, it appears that our good friend and neighbor, Mr. Clay, now favors 'protection,' that he may place a heavy 'duty' on every wealthy woman who goes out of this country and marries a 'penniless foreigner.' He does not reflect how difficult it is to overreach one of your Yankee nation, and that the 'foreigner' le pauve homme! frequently makes a bad bargain."

"He usually makes for himself a soft place."

"He may think so for a little while. Later on, he frequently meets some woman with whom he realized that life might have meant something

more than the material. If she scorns him, then he seeks diversion with others."

"An expedient that, in his own land, it may be, he can resort to with safety, but not here! In this community, if he would pull down an old and honored name by compromising, say, a neighbor, a young and attractive married woman—he is first ostracised by society and later on meets summary punishment at the hands of one of her male relations."

"So you would threaten me!" he said laughing and drawing nearer to her "Can we not make a compromise? Is there nothing that you would ask for yourself?"

"I can imagine no extremity great enough for me so far to humble myself," Marjorie replied proudly.

She left him standing—the lighted cigar still between fingers—the mocking smile upon his lips.

CHAPTER XXIII

A heavy frost still covered the ground—a pale shroud in which the garden had enveloped itself to bid Marjorie farewell.

Near the fountain, where she had spent so many happy hours, she stood looking about her. In the water a tiny boat, one of Rand's treasures he had failed to gather up, still floated about, and near by, she picked up his blue cap while with the other hand she patted the head of the great dog, Wolf, as he stood by wagging his tail and with a look of almost human intelligence in his eyes.

At noon Mrs. Clay, Miss Araminta and several others assembled on the gallery to bid them farewell. From the mistress of the house, Marjorie had received no word. Since the eventful evening of the musicale she had pleaded indisposition and had not issued from the seclusion of her chamber.

Not many hours later, Marjorie and Rand, with the Scotchman and his wife were speeding swiftly across the state—from the oak trees, the long stretches of white turnpike and the rolling hills of middle Tennessee, toward the west, and the great river that they had never seen. Early the next morning they came in sight of its mighty expanse of turbid water, sparkling like goldstones in the sunshine, and in a village, several miles from its banks on the opposite side, Marjorie and Rand reached their destination.

Andrew Markham's farm lay out about a mile

from the village, and as the days passed by the Scotchman, usually taking Rand with him, rode out early in the morning to his work, while Marjorie assisted Janet in making the cozy cottage immaculate.

Janet was a devoted housewife, and besides the daily cleaning, each week before the Sabbath there was the mahogany chest of drawers to be rubbed, and in the parlor brass and iron and candle sticks to be polished, until—had the Presbyters, who invariably took dinner with Janet after the service, been inclined to thoughts of vanity, they might have seen their faces reflected in the shining brass.

After awhile, Marjorie secured a place in the village school, and then Rand no longer rode with Andrew on Bullet out to his farm, or else followed the Scotchman as he worked with his flowers, or trained roses over the cottage porch. "A pair of weans," Janet was in the habit of speaking of them. Now he walked by his mother's side, his hand clasped in hers, to the village school. Thus the weeks passed swiftly by.

Mr. Bonnycastle was still in India. Andrew had just brought in a long letter to Marjorie, that opened out for her a wonderful vista of thought. He wrote of the excavation toward which he had contributed a large sum, of the people and their customs, and ended by giving her a most interesting account of the Ancient Order that he spoke of as having brought down to us much that is most sacred from a period many centuries prior to the birth of Christ. It was in this Occult Brotherhood, known as the "Essenes" or the "Great School" that we have every reason to believe the Master of Masters, Christ Himself, became a proficient. During his initiate of eighteen years, he is believed to

have visited Persia and many Eastern countries, for everywhere we find a legend that "a young teacher of marvelous power had appeared in their midst." Mr. Bonnycastle's letter brought to Marjorie a thrill of fresh courage, of hope.

For the moment she had overlooked another letter, addressed in a foreign handwriting, and bearing a crest. It was from d'Holbret. As she read the faint curve of her lip deepened into an expression of astonishment. He wrote that his wife regarded her as an imposter, whose name she never allowed mentioned in her presence. That there had been a development, however, in regard to her identity and that of Rand, of which he found it impossible to write, but that necessitated a personal interview between them, and that since a business engagement would take him to Brinkley (a little town within twenty miles from where she was living), while he regretted that he could not spare the time to come to her, she might meet him and make possible an interview that would be greatly to the advantage of her son.

The letter dropped from Marjorie's hand. What was the meaning of it? She had written and consulted a lawyer in regard to Rand's connection with Madame d'Holbret. Had this gentleman intimated to Baron d'Holbret that it would be advisable for him to make a confession, to effect a compromise of some kind? She was not without spirit! She did not wish to do anything foolish, however, to walk blindly into some trap, planned by the subtle brain of d'Holbret. On the other hand, she was Rand's guardian, his only friend, and it seemed cowardly to shirk an interview that might be to his advantage, that would at least give her a cue as to her farther mode of procedure in regard to his in-

terest. But how could she go? Only one train passed through the village—what excuse could she make to Andrew and Janet; how could she leave Rand? Taking up the letter from the floor, Marjorie examined the date. Evidently there had been some delay in the mail, and the appointment that d'Holbret had made was for five that afternoon. Marjorie walked over to the window and stood looking out at the heavy fog that had settled upon the distant river. It was now two o'clock; she knew that no train passed through the village again that night. Probably after all the force of circumstance had made it impossible for her to go!

Beneath the window a man was talking to Andrew Markham and suddenly Marjorie's attention was arrested by the word "Brinkley." Several tourists were going over to Brinkley, the man was saying, and there was a vacant seat in the hack that he had engaged, but something had prevented his going over.

"Can you tell me how long it will be before the hack leaves?" Marjorie asked, bending from the window.

"Only a few minutes," the man replied respectfully, taking off his cap.

"Do you think that I could secure the vacant seat? I have just received a letter that makes it important that I should go to Brinkley, Andrew," Marjorie said with slight hesitation.

"But what 'ill ye do about Rand?" the Scotchman regarded Marjorie with astonishment. "A laddie near o' ten is too heavy to be hauded in yo lap!"

"I think that I shall have to leave him with you and Janet," Marjorie replied with a faint smile. "I have never left him an hour in his life, but hope

to return in a few hours. Tell him, when he comes in, that I will be back on the next train." Pinning on her hat, and slipping quickly into a long cloak, Marjorie followed the man into the one small hostelry that the village afforded, and having mounted the hack that stood before the door, the party started on their long drive.

The fog had lifted from the river and now descended in a fine rain that obscured everything except the heavy clay road over which they traveled.

Marjorie was disappointed, for she remembered that in going over to Brinkley, Andrew Markham had said that she would pass a fine plantation owned by Mr. Bonnycastle, and from a box of pecans and several strings of quail that had arrived for Rand from some unknown source, she had an idea that Decimus Clay might be in the neighborhood. She had not thought of Decimus often in these months that had passed since she had seen him, and she remembered him now with some compunction of conscience for not having answered his letter. Probably the thought of Decimus was suggested by something else, the sense of protection that his presence had always brought to her. She was beginning to be frightened. The three traveling "tourists" who were her companions in the hack, from being slightly jovial after frequent potations from a suspicious looking bottle, had become hilarious, and this had culminated in a dispute that would soon end in a quarrel. They were traveling through a dense wood of pine, soon, however, they would reach a "half-way house" where the horses, exhausted by traveling through the heavy loam, would be changed, and trying to close her ears to some of the expletives that were now being freely used, she thought of the interview be-

fore her. In taking the trip she had acted impulsively. The improbability of Baron d'Holbret having come to this part of the world on any business matter, suddenly presented itself to her, and she remembered him as she had last seen him, the mocking smile on his lips. At the same time her boy's face rose before her; its expression of innocent integrity as he had begged her "not to believe a word that the Baron said." Should she go on? As she hesitated some words from one of her traveling companions brought her to a sudden resolution, and slipping, unnoticed, from the back of the vehicle, she walked to one side of the road where she was hidden from sight. She stood watching the hack as it gradually receded from sight, her slight figure in its long cloak seeming to melt into and become a part of the general grayness that pervaded the landscape. Twice a pedestrian passed her, rough and kindly looking men who watched her curiously as long as they were in sight. No sound broke the stillness save the swoop of the wings of a great bird that settled down near her. Marjorie's heart stood still with fear. She heard Rand call her name! Turning, she walked toward the village from which she had come. When she had walked some distance she took her seat on a low rail fence that extended along the roadside. Doubtless some vehicle would come along in time and take her up; if not, she would wait until she was sufficiently rested to continue her walk. Since she had turned back her heart had grown light; she was very tired though, and with half closed eyes she leaned wearily against the trunk of a tree. In front of her, some distance off, the road wound up a small hill between red banks of clay.

Down this hill a horseman was coming. At

first he looked quite small, a mere speck, but as he drew nearer Marjorie realized that he was a large man, riding a spirited horse; that he presented a very different appearance from any other man whom she had seen in this part of the country.

She watched him still with her head thrown back and half closed eyes, until he drew near, and then she suddenly straightened up. Certainly here was something too good to be true—it was Decimus Clay!

CHAPTER XXIV

As Decimus drew near he did not see Marjorie until his horse shied. and then he looked at her for a moment thinking that probably he was suffering from some hallucination, that he saw a vision! It was not until he was certain that it was without doubt Marjorie in the flesh. that he sprang down from his horse with a cry: "Marjorie! Out here on the roadside, miles from any habitation, in the rain. What does it mean?"

In the relief the sudden protection that his presence brought to her, Marjorie's nerves that had been on a tense strain for the past hour, relaxed, and she burst into a laugh that brought to her face dimples that—so often in the most stressful moments some insignificant memory will recur to us—she remembered Decimus had objected to when they were very young.

"I realize that my position must seem a little absurd," she said. "I had started over to Brinkley; there were several commercial tourists on the hack and their conduct was abominable, beside I remembered some words of Rand's that had so much weight with me that I decided to return."

"But why were you going over to Brinkley with such a company and on so unpropitious a day?"

Marjorie remembered that, in all probability, Decimus had not heard of the discovery of the relationship of Rand to Madame d'Holbret, of the

circumstances under which she had left the "Shelter," and she hesitated before replying.

"Since you do not seem inclined to answer me, will you tell if you were going over to meet someone?" Decimus asked.

"I was going over to meet Baron d'Holbret, Decimus," Marjorie said hastily, "the husband, you know, of the Madame d'Holbret who bought my old home, and in whose employment I remained for several months. There is much I would have to explain to you for you to understand."

"Do you mean the man who aunt writes has made common gossip of a young woman who was so imprudent as to be seen with him on his doorstep at dawn on the morning that I came over to bid you farewell?" As Decimus spoke he caught Marjorie's hand. He had grown very pale, and his glance frightened her. "Do you know what I would do, Marjorie, if I thought any man had gained an undue influence over you over a woman whom I loved?"

Marjorie had also grown pale; in her expression as she looked steadily into Decimus' eyes there was something as cold, as determined as his own.

"Doubtless you would kill him," she said in a low tone.

Decimus dropped Marjorie's hand, and stood looking at her. He then buried his face in his hands.

A man could commit but one sin against a woman that she would desire his death!

When Marjorie understood the construction that had been placed upon her words, a flood of crimson passed over her face, and she turned with a cry.

"You cannot think that, Decimus! There is no man upon earth whom I love, NOW." She drew

herself up proudly, "whom I would even think of loving. My only thought has been my child, who, this foreign adventurer, d'Holbret, means to despoil. He has persuaded his wife that Rand, the child of her son, perished a year ago in an epidemic and now his machinations have turned us adrift upon the world. The revelation in regard to our relationship to Madame d'Holbret has only come to me lately, I did understand, however, that this man would drag an old and honored name into the dust and—I do not know that I was right—but I allowed my own reputation to suffer that I might save from humiliation these people who had been my friends."

The color came back to Decimus' face, happiness to his eyes, and as Marjorie finished speaking, he touched her hand to his lips.

"Forgive me," he said humbly, "if a heart that has known but one devotion in the past, will know but one love in the future, can atone." As he spoke he lifted her gently on his horse.

For some time they proceeded in silence, Marjorie riding, Decimus walking by her side.

It was now five o'clock, the sky had cleared, after the rain there was a sweet, damp freshness in the air, redolent of the pine wood through which they passed. In the distance they could see the river, which caught a lurid reflection of the sunset on its eddying yellow surface.

The face of Decimus had regained its usual serenity, while, from time to time, Marjorie glanced at him with a new shyness. Her heart had grown strangely light, as with Decimus, she rode over this almost untrodden path.

CHAPTER XXV

Decimus left Marjorie at the gate of Andrew Markham's cottage. She was to have met Baron d' Holbret at five o'clock, and he determined to ride rapidly over to Brinkley with the hope of reaching there before that gentleman left. He was too late, however. Several people had seen a "distinguished foreign looking gentleman," but on not meeting Marjorie he had evidently made a hasty departure, and there was nothing for Decimus to do but to wend his way slowly back to his plantation, ten miles distant. This place, extending along the banks of the river, had been in the Bonnycastle family for many years, and while Mr. Robin Bonnycastle, living in another state, and absorbed in scientific pursuits, had rarely visited it, he had kept it up in conformity with the munificence that had characterized life on these large cotton plantations in ante-bellum days.

The plantation was several miles in extent, and partly encircled by a lake, which in the shape of a horse-shoe, reflected on its bright water the white cabins and green yards of the opposite bank. On the right side, a little farther on, lay the river; on the left, a cotton field of one thousand acres, laid out in the regular lines of a chess board, and at some distance apart, were sheds, each with its cistern and lightning rod, to shelter the negroes in case of storm. The cotton gin came next with its immense boiler and machinery to separate the seed

from the cotton, and a sawmill to cut into regular lengths huge trunks of walnut, live oak, and cottonwood. Next came the planter's house, a simple building, with galleries extending along the front and back—but a home of kindly and generous hospitality. No table could be better supplied, for the lake was filled with fish, over which the teal duck hovered, watching for their prey to come to the surface. In the woods there were deer and wild turkeys. Pecans and other nuts were plentiful, figs required but little cultivation, and the richest and sweetest milk was provided by the cows which grazed on the cane that grew on the outskirts of the plantation. After the planters house came an enclosure called the "quarters," or negro village. In this, adjoining the pretty little home of the overseer, there were two hospitals, one for the men, the other for the women, with rows of white cots and a nursery presided over by an old woman. who had charge of the children in the absence of the mothers in the field, and who also prepared the coffee which each field hand took before going into the field, to enable him better to resist the malaria of the country.

In the distance Decimus could now see the plantation bell, suspended high above the cabins, a grim sentinel overlooking the plantation.

Within the last few weeks his attention had been turned to the supervision of a new levee to resist the encroachments of the water. He had not had sufficient force to complete it, however, and since the incessant rains had given cause for fear of an overflow, he felt anxious. He was not thinking of this now, but of Marjorie. Of his astonishment at seeing her seated on the roadside, and of their conversation. The humiliation that the folly of Ap-

polina would in all probability bring to his uncle and aunt, and the singular influence that this man, the Baron d'Holbret, exercised over all whom he would have fall into his power. As he thought of this, Decimus' handsome face grew dark, and then, with a glow at his heart, his thoughts again reverted to Marjorie—to days in their childhood when in a little pink fluted sunbonnet, she had followed him about, or he had escorted her to school, carrying her books, and when necessary fighting her battles. Of another day, just before he had gone off to school, when he had placed one of her curls tenderly in his Bible. Then, two years later, just before he was to matriculate from college, the letter he had received telling him that she was to marry Lawrence Wyngate. He had not seen her since, until a few months before, when he had returned to visit his old home, and he found her little changed, the light in her eyes as true, and the sweetness about her mouth, with the dimple to which he had always pretended to object, as dear to him as ever. He saw, however, that she had given her whole life and heart to her boy, and, with a sigh, Decimus suddenly realized that he was traveling over a very bad country road. Shivering, he drew his raincoat about him. The mist had changed into a driving rain, blotting out the fields of cotton, and the tall river bluffs beneath which he could see the white sails of a boat passing from the shore through the mist and rain.

A few minutes later he reached his own door, and old "Lije" running out with a lantern to meet him, divested him of his wet outer garments. After stirring the huge logs into a brighter blaze, Lije drew down the shades and then the old man, kneeling down, took off Decimus' wet shoes. A

few months before Decimus had been taken down with ague and fever; up to that time he had only thought of planting from a commercial standpoint; since then it had appealed to him in a very different way. In the long weeks that he had lain with burning fever, his country doctor, and the negroes on the plantation, had constituted themselves his nurses, and where had he found kinder hands than these brown ones, that smoothed his pillows and held cooling drinks to his parched lips? After this, Decimus understood the attachment that, in many instances, still exists between the ex-slave and his old master. After Lije had divested Decimus of his wet shoes, he stood regarding him anxiously.

"Won't you please, Marse Decimus," he blurted out, "just swear around a little, sociable like sometimes, so I'll know that you're gwine to get well?"

Laughing, Decimus took from his pocket a plug of tobacco that he presented to the old man, who, beaming now, went out.

Stretching his long limbs comfortably, Decimus sat looking into the glowing embers. On the wall there were a few good pictures, at his feet, handsome skins of animals that he had killed himself on a hunt that he had taken for "big game" into Africa, and also into the Rocky Mountains. Lately—since those nights when he had lain awake, hour after hour, burning with fever he realized that there had been a great change in him. He thought of bloodshed, even of these wild creatures with abhorrence, and yet—he sought justifiably the life of Francis d'Holbret. The way in which Marjorie had spoken gave him an idea of the intensity of her feeling against him. With all of Marjorie's sweetness, she was very intense, beside, she had

been laboring under a nervous strain for several hours, and spoke under a stress of feeling.

Almost unconsciously he stretched out his hand and took up the little Bible in which for so many years Marjorie's curl had lain undisturbed, and opening it, he saw—"Who shall ascend into the mountains of the Lord? The innocent in his hands and clean of heart." Turning the pages his eyes fell upon the words, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." They shall see God! What was the meaning of it, that they should see God here upon earth? Pondering upon this thought he rose suddenly and, walking over to the window, raised the blind and stood looking out upon the river.

He had no need for books here. The face of the river had become a book to him, never so wonderful a book written by man! For each day it had a new story to tell, and listening closely, he had learned many of its cherished secrets. The day before, however, as he had looked into its brown, Sphinx-like face, he had not only seen the tragedies of the past, but had been filled with sudden foreboding for the present. Hurrying away he had consulted one of the oldest inhabitants and had been told that many years before the river had swept down the valley, submerging the village. Afterwards, a levee built that had allayed all fear for the public safety. After leaving his ranch for several years, he had rented the plantation from his uncle, he would accept it in no other way, and if he made a good crop this year he could buy it. He was not thinking of that, however, he was remembering that in the village that had been submerged, Marjorie and Rand were now living.

Twice in the night Decimus arose and looked

out upon the river, foreboding in his eyes. It was not until the next evening, however, when, worn out with the day upon the levee, and vigil of the night before, he lay asleep that he suddenly sprang to his feet and stood listening. There came to him, faintly at first, growing louder and louder, the booming of a bell. The great plantation bell was tolling! This was never done except in case of great danger. Decimus ran out, and mounting his horse, raced toward the village in which he had left Marjorie and Rand the evening before.

CHAPTER XXVI

After Decimus left her, Marjorie walked with a light step between the beds of sweet Williams and Mignonette up to the cottage door.

It was Saturday—the evening before the Sabbath. Doubtless some of the Presbyters had already arrived, and this accounted for the light that shone between the blinds of the parlor windows. No one was expecting her, and that she might give Rand a surprise, Marjorie crept in softly, and stood for a minute looking in at the half open door.

In order to light the candles on the high mantel, Janet had mounted on a chair on which she now stood with a lighted taper in her hand, while Rand looked up at her, and back of him—Marjorie uttered a cry of pleasure—stood Mammy!

"I was making a bow and arrow, Dearest, when I heard that you had gone away, and I was so much astonished at your going off without speaking to me." Rand patted Marjorie's cheek, "that I cut my hand and I cried out. It was not because it hurt," Rand added quickly, remembering that he was no longer a baby, "I think it was because you were not here, and then—I looked up and saw Mammy, with her satchel in her hand, coming in at the door."

"Baron d'Holbret wrote and asked me to meet him at Brinkley, and advise with him, that it would be to your interest son," Marjorie said

gravely. "On the way over I was reminded of something that you said about him, and although you are a little boy, I took your judgment in regard to a trait in his character and was deliberating whether it would not be better for me to return, when I heard you call my name. I thank God for it!"

"Were ye sae near hame then?" Janet asked, with curiosity.

"I was miles away, Janet, yet nevertheless I heard Rand cry." Marjorie laughed, but in her tone there was perfect conviction.

The practical Scotchwoman, not understanding this figurative language, shook her head incredulously, and yet—like most of the Scotch she had perfect faith in the "second sight." Concluding that Marjorie was overwrought by her long ride, Janet brought her a warm drink, and taking off her wraps. she stirred the pine logs into a brighter blaze, while Marjorie, after examining the cut finger, leaned back in her chair, looking first at Rand, and then at Mammy, grateful to be at home again. Almost too happy for words!

"I am sure that when you saw Mammy, the pain must have been better," Marjorie said.

"It did me good," Rand replied seriously. "But something hurt me here," he put his hand on his heart, "that did not get well until I saw you."

Marjorie nestled her head against Rand's little shoulder with a happy laugh.

"I ha' promised the laddie tae tak him over to Lynn wi' me in the mornin'," Andrew Markham said, coming into the room. "It's only three miles awa'; he can ride the roan colt, an we gae by the river road."

"To be gone all day?" Marjorie exclaimed in

sudden alarm. "You know the river is very high."

"I dinna think there'll be a flood," Andrew replied, "nae soon, an' ye wad nae mak a baby o' a big lad o' nine!"

"Going on ten," Rand interposed modestly.

"Why Rand is thinkin' o' enlisting in the airmy," the Scotchman said, with a twinkle in his eye. "The last time we rode over to Lynn I found him with Andy Souter, who is going to be a sojer, in the office of the recruiting officer, but—— he wa' found under age!"

Marjorie did not see the humor of the situation—the idea of Rand growing out of his babyhood, and someone actually thinking of a vocation for him was such a shock.

She finally gave her consent to the "outing" on condition that Rand was to return before night, and when the morning came and she watched her boy ride off on Bullet, his small figure so erect, his blue eyes beaming with pleasure, she stood waving her hand to him as long as he was in sight. As they rode along they were joined by Andy Souter, who lived near them, and who was going to Lynn to make his final preparations before leaving on a boat that was expected that evening, filled with recruits for the army and navy. When Andrew Markham stopped on the way and went into a house to speak to some one on business, Andy told Rand all about himself; he was sixteen, his mother was a widow, his father had died only lately, and he had a great many little brothers and sisters. He was going to send back all the money he made to pay off a mortgage on their plantation, and, when he got to be a general in the army, he was going to build them all a beautiful house in Washington, and send his brothers to Princeton.

As Rand listened, his heart ached. His mother had looked pale and tired lately, and, although she had tried to keep it from him, he knew that she often worried about money matters. If he were only old, like Andy, his Dearest One should never again have the little pucker that he had noticed come between her eyes when she added up her accounts, and they would have a home of their own where she should never know a care. Before he had been satisfied with being a little boy, but now for the first time, he realized the dignity and opportunity implied by age. Andrew Markham stayed in the house for some time, and the boys, having dismounted for a drink of water, when Andy turned his back Rand stood on tiptoes to see if he could not reach up to his ear and then he looked quickly around.

There was no one to see him, however, only the broad expanse of the Mississippi, sombre and majestic, fraught with tragedy and burying unfathomed mysteries in its solemn depths.

It was really old! Involuntarily Rand took off his cap before it. All else was young. As they had come off, Janet had said that there was to be a young moon to-night, and brushing the branches of the trees aside, he had noticed that they were green and bursting with bud. Even Bullet was young! The day before, a man who wished to buy the colt from Andrew Markham had said—Rand was perfectly acquainted with the Scotch dialect and he remembered the words—"The roan colt may have a pedigree as long as his legs, mon, ye say he is a thoroughbred, but thoroughbreds turned on ordinary paisture bear uncommon reseemblance to ordinary cattle. But then—he is young!"

Andrew had replied: "The roan colt may not be

a hansom young beastie, but his grandsire won a great race at Lexington, and tho' his descendant, taken from the blue grass of Tennessee, may have degenerated, he is a thoroughbred still! The colt is nae mine to sell, howe'er, I ha' gi'ed him to Rand."

As Rand remembered this conversation, he laughed, for he felt sure that some day there lay before Bullet a great race such as his grandsire had won at Lexington.

After they reached Lynn, the day wore on only too quickly. Andrew Markham had expected to return in the evening at six o'clock. When the time arrived, however, he found that it would be impossible for him to leave before nine that night; he had promised Marjorie that Rand should return before six. A light wind had sprung up, and looking over the river, Andrew shook his head doubtfully. Rand and Bullet seemed a little too young to trust alone. It would not be a long ride, however, and one that Rand and Bullet had frequently taken with him. Marjorie would be uneasy; on the whole it seemed best that he should return, and having come to this conclusion, Andrew watched Bullet and his youthful rider start on their homeward journey. Rand and the colt proceeded slowly, enjoying this first taste of freedom.

Above them a few pale stars were shining; not long before there had been stars also beneath, the white blooms of the cotton that had deepened into a rosate hue, and then having given up long fleecy boles of cotton, the fields had assumed a hue of sombre brown. On one side lay the river, and as Rand gazed up and down its murky course, a steamboat hove into sight. From the prow streamed gay bunting, while from the deck cheers

and strains of music reached the shore. He felt sure that this was the boat that Andy was to leave on, and in his excitement Rand sprang from Bullet's back and going nearer to the water, waved his cap and shouted—until the boat was swallowed up, a black speck in the distance.

As they had come along in the morning Andrew had said: "Beginning here for several miles there extends a levee built by the Government, after an overflow that had submerged their village. That was some years before, however, and now might never happen again.

Near him he saw what looked like a small red flower, and reminded of what Decimus Clay had told him of the lizard that simulated being a flower, he wished that his mother was with him. From a pile of brush near by, several small, shy creatures ran out, and looking down, he noticed that the river was seeping through a small hole in the levee. It seemed as if a minute before he might almost have stopped it with his hand—but now, it was rapidly widening, and he saw that the levee for several feet was giving away.

He gazed at it for a minute, vacantly, dazed, and then a terrible conviction forced itself upon Rand's mind. This innocent looking aperture was an opening through which a mighty torrent would soon pour, rushing down the valley, submerge the town, his home—his mother! He must save her! He climbed quickly upon Bullet's back—a word and the race began! In front of them, several miles away, the hills among which the village nestled—behind, the river, rapidly increasing in volume and advancing now with a sullen roar. With his arms clasped about the colt's neck, horse and rider

seemed fused into one, scarcely touching the earth over which they passed.

When he reached the village some one had already made the danger known. With prayers and cries, people were running to the surrounding hills. Mothers clasping their babies in their arms, and the young and strong bearing up the old and infirm. There was no thought of property, only that of life.

In his own home he found no one. Had his mother been conveyed to a place of safety? He looked about the empty rooms in despair. The house was already filled with water, however, for the river was all about, a broad expanse of water extending on every side and rapidly filling up the town.

Heedless of his own danger, Rand struggled on. Now the colt was flecked with foam, and blood dripping from his mouth, but he continued to swim bravely, bearing his light burden above the waves. Rand's strength was failing rapidly and it was near his own home that he felt that the death from which he had tried to save his mother was near to him. He stood on the brink of eternity! Looking back at his empty home, he cried softly, "Mother!"

Above the roar of the water, he heard a shout. A man on a powerful horse breasted the waves, calling to him words of encouragement.

Rand's arms, falling from Bullet's neck, were held out, and with his eyes turned up to the starry dome, the flood closed above him.

CHAPTER XXVII

When Rand regained consciousness he was borne up in the arms of Decimus Clay. He did not open his eyes again for several hours, and then his mother stood beside him.

"It was water from the river of life that your poor old Mammy thought you'd be drinking, honey!" he heard, in a well-known voice, and then his mother's soft tones.

"He who drinks of that water shall never be athirst!" Andrew Markham's broad, cheery accents came to him, very distinctly. "I told you Rand was a lad o' pairts! The little laddie wa' sair spent tho' an' if Decimus Clay hadna reached him as he fell frae the colt's back, I doot but he would hae slippit frae us. There is naething the folk can do to show their thanks to Maister Clay, and to Rand to whom they owe their lives."

Rand smiled faintly, he could not speak.

"The wee bit coltie did his part weel," Andrew went on chuckling. "The puir beastie is a thoroughbred after all!"

And now Rand knew for certain that he must be alive, for he heard his mother say, in her clear, sweet voice:

"Indeed he is, Andrew! Rand, and Mr. Clay, and the roan colt are thoroughbreds—all three!"

As Rand fell once more into a peaceful sleep, he could hear Mammy chuckling to herself, as she sat by the bedside fanning him, and anxiously

watching every change in his expression. Then Andrew's firm steps sounded quite loud to him as he walked across the room, trying not to make a noise. These, too, gradually died away, and then the little boy fell into a happy oblivion.

On the evening of the flood, Marjorie had stood looking with happy, expectant eyes, up the road, awaiting Rand's return. In the distance she saw a horseman, coming at full gallop, like the wind, toward her. When he drew near and she saw that it was Decimus Clay, her heart stood still with fear. Something had happened to Rand! Or—another thought suggested itself to her, Decimus, excited by her words, had gone over to Brinkley and killed Baron d'Holbret. She had no time to think, for Decimus, having reached her, without a word, pointed to the distance and she saw what appeared to be a vast sheet of water, rapidly sweeping toward them. When she refused to leave without Rand, Decimus, giving the warning to Janet and others, as he went along, had taken her up bodily and carried her to one of the surrounding hills. After this, hours seemed to pass and then, as crazed with grief over Rand, she gazed with anguished eyes into the seething water. Decimus had returned to her, bearing Rand's apparently lifeless body, and placed him in her outstretched arms.

Since that day no one had seen or heard of Decimus! Andrew Markham, who had made his way to the village in a boat soon after the village had been submerged, said that he had seen him in a boat rowed by old Lije going toward his plantation; that as he swam to the shore with Rand, he had been struck by a floating log and badly injured, and when he could leave had been taken to

the city and placed in a hospital. No one really knew, however, whether Decimus was still alive.

As the days wore on, Rand did not regain his strength, and Marjorie in sudden alarm, sent for a physician. This functionary, however, after leaving a prescription and a few directions, took his departure without throwing any light upon Rand's condition. A week later Marjorie sent to the nearest city for one of the most eminent members of his profession. and after an examination, he informed her that Rand's heart was weak, that this had been greatly increased by the nervous shock that he had received in the flood, but little could be done except to avoid all excitement and that Rand must live in the open air.

Rand, who had never allowed himself to be made a "baby" of, and who had always 'taken care of his mother," as he watched the shadow deepen in Marjorie's eyes, laughed at their fears, declaring that "now since they were going to spend most of their time in the woods, like the old giant, Anteus, of whom his Mother had read him. every time he touched the earth he expected to gain strength, and finally he would kill the 'Draygon' of whom Andrew was going to tell him."

"What 'ill I tell ye? Abbo' the draygon when he lived in a den, an fire an reek come out o' his mouth when folks wa' goin' by?" Andrew asked, pleased at this tribute to his gift as a raconteur.

"Yes, tell me that. Andrew, you told me when I was little, and I may never hear it again."

Andrew turned and looked at Rand quickly: "Ye mus' go out in the sunshine, noo, laddie," he said gently, and with a little quaver in his voice that the strong Scotchman could not suppress, "I'll tell ye of the draygon anither time."

In this Southern climate May was warm and balmy, and as the days now passed, Rand and Marjorie lived close to the heart of the woods, renewing their acquaintance with the birds and other small wild things, becoming each day more deeply versed in the lore that they loved so well. They knew just where the woodpeckers had stored their winter provisions, pecking holes in the trunks of the trees, in which they placed acorns, that, since the woodpeckers were not vegetarians, would decay, and filled with worms, provide dainty feasts. Where the chipmonks and the squirrels had their hiding places, and the birds built their nests. At first they only saw the bright eyes of these small shy things shining at them from a distance, but as time went on, they frequently drew near, no longer afraid of their human friends. Often Marjorie read aloud, or they gathered pine needles, and made them into cushions, while the shadow of fear in Marjorie eyes, as she watched Rand, deepened. There were times when they sat without speaking —moments, when obeying the inaudible but urgent command of silence, Marjorie's soul, and that of her child, embraced, each listening to the other, with lips that were silent.

In the long hours of a night of anxiety, Marjorie lay with wide open eyes. Attracted by a faint sound, she turned, and was surprised to see Mr. Bonnycastle seated near her. Rising, he came toward her, and she noticed that his garment, made of some soft white material (in a fashion peculiar to the far East), scintillated as if with light. He took her hand, and she experienced a sensation of lightness, of rising on wings from a black pit of despair.

"Remember, Marjorie," he said, "there is no

such thing as death. The transition that we call death is merely an incident in the life of the soul. The putting off or dispensing with the physical body does not in the least alter the nature, or character of the individual. Should Rand leave you, the physical alone would be cast aside, and this replaced by a body celestial, even more beautiful! There are great fixed laws; one of these is that we are each an essential part of the whole. It may be that Rand's innocent soul, his budding genius, are needed upon another plane, while your heart, now centered in your child, may go out to humanity with broader sympathy. We are God's agents, visible and tangible agents, and we are here to help. I have an idea that I shall not return to you again. This, however, will depend upon yourself. You are endowed with unusual attributes, and even here, in the flesh, it may be——"

Mr. Bonnycastle did not finish speaking, but leaning over. he touched his lips to her forehead, and she experienced again the sensation of lightness—of having risen on wings toward gates of peace.

Marjorie opened her eyes—or had they been open all the time? She could not tell.

Mr. Bonnycastle had said that there was no such thing as death. But there could be the agony of separation! She did not understand the manner in which many accepted the death of their loved ones, placidly comforting themselves with a vague hope that they are somewhere—angels, probably! Or else in Purgatory awaiting intercession. She felt that she must KNOW. Then, as she had loved the living, she would love the dead, and wait!

But Rand was not to leave Marjorie. As the color came back to his cheeks, vigor to his little

body, Marjorie felt that God's temples, the woods, were not large enough to hold her gratitude. At times she longed to be back in the Convent, where she was educated, to listen to the grand intoning of the "Magnificent," or raise her voice, with the gentle nuns, in the beautiful Canticle, "My soul doth magnify the Lord!"

Her thoughts now turned toward Decimus. Was he still alive? He had risked his life. it might be that he had given it, for that of her child. How faithful he had been through the years! How brave and loyal is soul! She had written to him, giving as much expression of her gratitude as it was possible for her to convey. The letter had been sent to a hospital where it was said after the flood, he had been taken. She did not know, however, whether the letter had ever been receivd.

"Dearest" (Rand, still something of an invalid, held up to Marjorie a bouquet of wild flowers that Janet had brought him), "don't you think that Mr. Decimus Clay must be very anxious to see us?"

The color came to Marjorie's face. Probably it was due to the fact that Janet turned and looked at her, and over the serious face of the Scotchwoman there was a slight twitching, as if from an effort to repress a smile.

"I have written to Mr. Clay, darling, and now, since I can leave you, if it is necessary, I will go and nurse him."

"And if he gets well," Rand put down his wild flowers, and drawing Marjorie down to him, nestled his cheek close to hers. "Don't you think that we had better, after all, marry Mr. Decimus, Dearest? I think Mammy would be willing."

Janet was discreet enough to turn her head. As Marjorie kissed Rand no one could see her face.

After this she regarded, with wistful eyes, the little postmistress in the village. The message that she expected, however, did not come. Instead, there came to her a letter with a black border. At the same time she received a telegram. This contained only a few words, and it was signed, "Charlotte d'Holbret."

CHAPTER XXVIII

The message that Marjorie received was to the effect that her immediate presence was required at the "Shelter." She stood, regarding the words, for a moment, finding it difficult to grasp their meaning. Then, with trembling fingers, she broke the seal of the black bordered envelope.

It was not Decimus! The letter was from Mrs. Clay to notify her that her brother, Mr. Robin Bonnycastle, had passed into the "Beyond," and consequently she would return home at once. Before leaving she had seen her brother, who had just returned from the Orient, where he had accomplished much in his researches for the "School of Science." Mr. Bonnycastle had wished that Marjorie should be informed of the disposition that he made of his property.

To her (his sister) he left a large amount made from his works on scientific subjects, also his personal property, with the exception of a portrait that was to go to Marjorie. His nephew, Decimus Clay, was the logical heir to the "entailed property." This property carried with it a condition, that of "celibacy," imposed by the eccentric legator of the will. Since Decimus was the last male, however, to whom the property could revert, it was the privilege of Mr. Bonnycastle to make such disposition of it as he wished, and he left it, without condition, to his nephew, Decimus Clay, and his heirs. To Marjorie Wyngate he left a legacy, for the sake

of her mother, to whom he had given a "great and faithful love."

Marjorie bowed her head in her hands, remembering his kindness to her in the past, his thought for her in the future. Before his departure from the earth his spirit had come to her, at the sick bed of Rand, in what she had thought at the time to be a dream. He had awakened her to the fact that we may not center our affections upon any one earthly object. "No man liveth to himself," an element of altruism is necessary to development. After this, his glorious spirit had traveled to the radiance of distant suns, leaving those who loved him here, in the shadow.

The next evening from a little station that had once been her home, Marjorie alighted from a train and eluding a persistent hack driver, walked rapidly down a road with which she was perfectly familiar. She had gone for some distance when a crisp autumn breeze stirred the branches of the oak trees and blew the leaves in eddying gusts about her feet. Marjorie took up one of them and held it in her hand. Withered and brown, once on some high tree with the blue of the sky and the songs of birds near. Green sap had pulsed through its veins. Now it lay a trampled leaf by the roadside!

Before reaching the "Shelter," she passed the home of the Clays. The blinds had not yet been closed and she could see Mrs. Clay bending above the invalids chair, Appolina's child playing upon the floor, and a shadow larger than the others, whom she could not make out.

As she drew near to her old home, the dog Wolf came bounding toward her, fawning upon her and showing every sign of delight at seeing her

again, and then gravely escorting her to the house.

The door was opened by Miss Araminta. She held a lighted candle in her hand, and Marjorie noticed that she looked ill and wan. "She cannot live!" Miss Araminta's voice trembled. "And yet" —a smile transformed Miss Araminta's face—"how changed she is! To her troubled soul has at last come peace."

Marjorie took Miss Araminta's hand, stroking it within her own. Strange as it seemed—for the cold, hard woman, her tyrant, who now lay dying, there had sprung up in the starved heart of the old maiden lady the gentle flower of love, keeping it alive, unwithered, through her lonely years!

Marjorie walked over to the window, and drew aside the curtains. The wind had risen, a cold wind that, sweeping from over the black wastes of night, stirred the oak trees and jarred the window sash and doors.

Following Miss Araminta without a word, Marjorie ascended the broad stairway, and entered Madame d'Holbret's room. On the teestered bedstead (so replete with memories for Marjorie) she lay quite still, on her face, as Miss Araminta had said, a great peace.

"You expected to find me dead, Marjorie Wyngate," she said, smiling faintly, "but for the first time you find me alive. 'A little child shall lead them.' It was your child who has led me into Life—he was my son, my own little boy who had come back to me, the nobility of his nature, his innocent, childish prattle softened my hard heart. For the first time it was not money that I loved with a miser's love, but it was to save it for the child that I hoarded it, secreting large sums from the man——" A great wave of bitterness swept

over Madame d'Holbret's face, her voice had become so faint it was now scarcely audible—"The man, Francis d'Holbret, who lied to me and deceived me into believing that my son's child and his wife had perished, who afterwards was responsible for my turning them from my door—who struck me"—she touched the scar on her face—"and now forging has brought disgrace to my name! Can you forgive me, Marjorie, for the child's sake?"

"For His sake who has forgiven us all," Marjorie said, kneeling by the bedside.

Madame d'Holbret made a sudden effort to rise, called her son's name, and fell back among the pillows——.

CHAPTER XXIX

Not many hours after the stroke that had paralyzed Madame d'Holbret's speech, she passed quietly away out into the great unknown.

When the end had come, Dr. Pell and Mr. Jasper insisted that, worn out by the vigils of the night and day, Marjorie should rest. Her only desire, however, was to escape for a short time from the darkened house, and throwing a light shawl around her, she slipped through a side door out into the night.

It was not late, she had heard the clock strike nine, as she passed through the hall, and now, after softly closing the door, she stood taking in long breaths of air and enjoying the beauty of the night —the moonlit lawn and walks with the stately white yucca standing on each side like sentinels on guard. Only beneath the oak trees there were dark shadows.

Marjorie walked slowly, going over the last few painful hours, and then, her mind traveling farther back she recalled the first day she had spent beneath Madame d'Holbret's roof. With what arrogant scorn Madame d'Holbret had looked her over to "see if she would do." And then the long months that had followed until at last her character had been assailed. She did not blame Madame d'Holbret for that, however, the unhappy woman had died begging her forgiveness. And Rand! When he returned to the "Shelter," it would not

be as a child whose presence was for a time barely tolerated, but as the heir coming into his rightful inheritance; A happy smile passed over Marjorie's face, a few hours before she had received a letter from Rand, and she took from her bosom a folded sheet on which the text in round childish letters could be plainly seen.

"Dearest:

"Mammy has just measured me on the door, and I am not much larger towards being a man to take care of you. But you have been away five days and Andrew Markham says nothing can grow without sunshine. I asked him if you stayed away for five weeks if I would not get to be a very very little boy, and he thinks I would.

"Rand."

Why read it? Did she not know every word of it by heart, and could she not in fancy see Rand as he wrote—his long lashes resting upon his rounded cheeks, while Mammy and Andrew and Janet Markham hovering near, watched with pride his first epistolatory effort.

It was to the forethought and generosity of Decimus that they owed so much. He had bought in the "Shelter" for Rand. Fortunately, too, there was a large sum of money in the bank that the Baron d'Holbret, with all his craft, had never been able to reach, and this Madame d'Holbret had left to Rand. With this they would pay Decimus, but she knew very well that in his mind there had been no thought of payment. As Marjorie thought of Decimus she was surprised to find the color

mounting to her face and her heart beats becoming a little more rapid.

A few light clouds were drifting across the face of the moon, and a breeze began to stir among the leaves. She noticed a chill in the air and shivered. Beneath the shadows of the trees and over the moonlit spaces that lay between, Marjorie unconsciously accelerating her steps, walked rapidly, until becoming aware of an unusual sound, she suddenly halted.

Wolf had followed her and that accounted for the low deep growl that had reached her ears.

She now stood near the aperture in the hedge that had been used as far back as she could remember by the inmates of the two places, as more convenient than walking around by the turnpike road. But, while this entrance in the hawthorn hedge was at one extreme end of the grove of trees that surrounded the "Shelter," and fully half a mile from the house, it opened directly upon a small lawn in which stood the colonial mansion of the Clay's, with only a small clump of evergreens to intercept the view of the white corinthian pillars, and stone steps.

It was in this thicket of arborvitae and cedar that Marjorie now thought that she saw something move. At the same time her attention was again directed to Wolf. The dog stood not far from her, still, alert, his hair bristling, a black, gaunt object silhouetted against the gray light.

She would have turned to retrace her steps, but noticed that the something that had attracted her attention toward the evergreens moved also, that it was emerging from the shadow, taking definite shape, and she recognized as he came rapidly toward her—Baron d'Holbret.

As their eyes met neither spoke. A mocking smile hovered about his lips.

"The time, the place, and now—the lady," he said lightly.

Marjorie made a slight gesture toward the front door, plainly seen of the Clay home, and then, without replying, she laid upon Wolf a restraining hand.

"How many things in this world you do not understand!" he said slowly. "It is almost incredible! May I point out to you that in every man's life there are three women? One is the past, we will call her a regret, the next we might call a rebound, and the third——"

"A *recurrence?*" suggested Marjorie, unable to restrain this sarcasm.

"No, you are mistaken!" he drew a step nearer, and his voice grew soft, almost tender. "It is this woman, the woman whom he hoped to win but who eluded him, who could have saved him from the degradation of the other two. It is for her he longs, how deeply he can never tell!"

He spoke with intense feeling.

"Go and look upon the woman whom you murdered!" Marjorie said coldly, pointing toward the house. "The brain you controlled is still, the heart you broke no longer beats. But your wicked scheme has come to naught—for she died knowing all. I believe you brought about the death of her only son; I know you turned his young child a penniless orphan from her door."

Beneath Marjorie's scorn d'Holbret winced as under the lash of a whip. But quickly recovering himself, his face flamed with sudden passion.

"Do you know what you are doing?" he said, almost roughtly, his voice coming thick and hoarse

as she had never heard it. "In setting my brain on fire, not only with love, but with hatred, and revenge, do you not realize your danger?" He advanced toward her——

The dog slipped from beneath Marjorie's hand and she saw him bound through the air.

As Francis d'Holbret, with a cry, shook him off, Wolf wheeled about and came at him furiously. His back was toward Marjorie, as the struggle began.

She stood as if rooted to the spot. The scene was strangely familiar to her. She remembered her vision *two men* and a *dog,* upon a *bridge* that spanned a deep but *narrow chasm.* One man threw the other from the bridge into the ravine. The victim was her *husband,* the dog *Wolf,* the murderer *Baron d'Holbret.*

Suddenly there was a loud scream close beside her. Escaping from the terror that held her motionless, Marjorie now ran, panic-stricken through the endless mystery of shadows, of which she herself seemed to form a part, until one shadow longer than the others suddenly enveloped her, held her close, and becoming warm and human, touched tenderly her hair and cheek and chafed her cold hands.

"Oh, Decimus! Decimus!" she cried in agonized tones. "Do not stop here. Go quickly, there!" she pointed, with tremblng fiingers toward the thicket.

"And leave you here alone?" Decimus looked at Marjorie, all his love in his eyes. "Beside," he said quietly, "it would be useless now. I came directly in your footsteps. d'Holbret may recover, but he will be horribly disfigured. The men are looking after him."

"If the dog had only killed him!" said Marjorie fiercely. Overwrought, she burst into tears.

"I think," said Decimus gently, "that the worst punishment for such a wretch is to have to live because he is afraid to die. Wolf did his work well. The dog has been the avenger."

CHAPTER XXX

The tragedy in the grove was a shock from which Marjorie did not soon recover. But she had no time to think of herself, for she and Miss Araminta had many sad offices to perform for their late employer.

As Marjorie looked for the last time upon the face composed for its last sleep, she was struck with the thought that it was noble. Could it be that the impress left by the death angel upon the clay for all time is an index of the real character of its former tenant?

Turning slowly away she descended the steps. At the front door she met Mr. Jasper and Dr. Pell, who were to spend the night in vigil, and standing back of them was Mrs. Clay.

She was so changed that Marjorie scarcely recognized her, her proud head no longer held high, and her brilliant eyes dim with weeping.

Taking her hands, Marjorie drew her old friend into the library, and making her comfortable, drew up close to her a small chair for herself.

"Madame d'Holbret is not the only person who would ask your forgiveness, Marjorie," Mrs. Clay wiped the tears from her eyes.

"Do not think of it!" said Marjorie, earnestly. "All the kindnesses I have received from Mr. Clay and yourself since my childhood would certainly condone your——" she hesitated, "one misunder-

standing. I can assure you it is not only forgiven, but forgotten, and now tell me——"

"The Baron d'Holbret, who as we know now to have been F. Talbert, afterwards the Baron d'Holbret, and the companion on his last excursion of your husband. Remembering this, can I find it in my heart to say, poor wretch! Appolina stood watching you both in the grove, and when she saw the attack made by the dog, she screamed and fled in utter terror to the house. Decimus and one of the men on the place heard her and came to the rescue—when they reached the spot the struggle was almost over. Wolf had been shot. Appolina cried out something incoherent about having seen you, and Decimus hastened off in search of you, while the man came to the assistance of d'Holbret. He says that he was covered with blood and frightfully injured, but managed to crawl off somewhere and has not been heard of since."

"How is Appolina:" Marjorie asked sympathetically.

"She is quite calm now, and has decided to go abroad. Her husband, George Blair, has been noble." In speaking of Appolina, for the first time Mrs. Clay raised her eyes from the floor. "He says that it is on account of Mr. Clay and myself, but I really believes he loves my child. Appolina wished me to repeat every word she uttered and to ask your pardon. It seems that Decimus," Mrs. Clay hesitated a little, "has been the one love of her life, but they were double cousins, and besides, he had no eyes for anyone but you. My poor girl was from childhood madly jealous and the indifference of Decimus she declares made her wreckless. She frankly says that she married George Blair for his money. Baron d'Holbret was a welcome diver-

sion. Then you came, all the old jealous feelings were awakened. She declares that she is going to give up cards, go to mass—you know George Blair is a Catholic—and become now a reformed character. Of course, I try to encourage her, but one thing she said hurt me. She declares that she will find a strict convent in which to educate Katharyn. My indulgent old-fashioned training, she insists, will never fit the child for what she will have to meet in these modern times. Ultra strictness or entire indifference to convention are the two alternatives now-a-days. I fear, my dear Marjorie. that the day of the 'old-fashioned lady' is gone forever."

"The world will always love the 'old-fashioned lady,' Marjorie cried, impulsively kissing Mrs. Clay's cheek, upon which there was now a delicate blush. "Whatever may be the trend of the times, its frank materialism, the enfranchisement of its women, the old-fashioned lady will always bring back to our minds vivid impressions of the social life of which she was once a center. When the 'new woman' is rightly understood, however, it will be seen that her ideals are not inconsistent with the attributes assigned now only to the old-fashioned lady." Marjorie glanced toward the garden. "We shall always love the spicy pinks and lavender, but that rose I see is the same sweet rose of the olden time, only with intelligent culture she has developed new leaves, a richer coloring, until having attained perfection, we now see a *glorious rose!*"

"Now tell me something of dear Mr. Clay?" Marjorie asked, changing the subject.

Mrs. Clay looked up, trying to smile. "He has not spoken but once. You know how patient he is! As I was lowering him down on the couch this

morning, he pointed to the history of the American people he had laid down. 'Like out wittiest President, I talk better when I lie,' he said, and smiled up at me. After he dozed off, I looked but had no time or eyes, my dear, to read it. I think these were the last words of one of the Adams."

Mrs. Clay had risen to leave, and as usual, Marjorie walked out with her. Only now they did not take the short path through the hedge—that was still too replete with tragic memory—but walked the long way to the front gate. Here, after Mrs. Clay had gone off a short distance, Marjorie called to her. "Oh, Mrs. Clay, do you know about dear Miss Araminta, and little Dr. Pell?"

"Indeed I do, she told me to-day," Mrs. Clay replied, with something of the old brightness in her face, for like most good, kind women, she liked a romance, "they are soon to be married, I am so glad!"

"You would never believe how romantic Dr. Pell could look," Marjorie declared with a smile, "unless you had seen him kissing Miss Araminta's hand!"

"Do you know," said Mrs. Clay, becoming quite interested, "I always thought Lawyer Jasper had aspirations in that quarter."

"In that case," said Marjorie brightly, "you must acknowledge that the "old-fashioned lady" is completely vindicated. Miss Araminta could never be described in any other way."

This little jest served its purpose, for Mrs. Clay smiled through her tears, as she bade Marjorie good-bye.

As Marjorie returned alone she stopped to enjoy the beauty of the day. In all her sorrows, what a balm in Gilead nature had been to her!

The shadows of her life were quickly turning

into sunshine. She could look forward now to Rand's joyous home-coming, after their first real separation, and with what different feelings they would wander through the garden and the woods.

There was another thought, sweet and sacred, for now Marjorie knew her own heart. After all, is not the human heart like any other citadel? "It capitulates when the enemy has discovered its weakest point." Marjorie smiled, as she recalled Decimus' words.

Well she knew, and at the thought the lovely color deepened in her face. that it was Decimus she needed, had needed all her life. This big, simple nature was the complement of her own. And why? Because, like herself, he had lived near to nature, to the "good brown earth," that is the truest heritage of us all.

* * * * * * * *

The winter was over, and the garden at the "Shelter" had thrown off its covering of somber brown; everywhere now above the moist earth could be seen delicate green bulbs and the pale flowers of early spring.

Decimus and Marjorie stood before a tall rose bush watching an anxious little mother bird build her nest, while her mate caroled to her near by.

"Two birds and one nest, that is the story," quoted Decimus happily as they turned away.

"Do you know," said Marjorie, after a short pause in which they walked slowly down the garden walk, "that I often feel that Mr. Bonnycastle is near me. Separated by but a faint barrier I think of him still as Master of an Inner Court of spiritual forces, that he set in motion, and that have brought about happy issues in the lives of those he loved."

"We will make 'Robin's Roost' a memorial to him," Decimus' practical mind at once suggested, "a home where young boys can be trained for scientific pursuits. That would have pleased him."

"And a memorial window with his noble and intellectual face encircled with glowing colors, and the motto of his life," Marjorie replied with kindling eyes, and then paused, for Decimus had leaned over and now rose to his feet, holding out to her a tiny clover leaf.

"The first one I ever found!" Decimus' hand closed over Marjorie's and he gently drew her down to a seat by his side.

"One leaf is for love. The love for which you kept me waiting so long, Marjorie. But that is nearly over now. If you could know what it means to me to feel that you are really to be mine! In all the waiting I hardly dared to hope. All I knew was that there could be but one marriage for me, but one home, and that in it must be the one love of my life. Sometimes it seems too good to be true. Are you sure——" Decimus' hand closed more closely over Marjorie's, his clear eyes scanned her face, "that the love you have given me is no longer that which you would give a brother—that it is not," he hesitated, "because of Rand?"

Marjorie did not reply at once. She looked over to the turrets of "Robin's Roost" and the white pillars of the Clays' home and then her eyes rested upon the garden at the "Shelter," and Rand's straight young figure flitting in and out in some game among the trees on the lawn. The old familiar landscape that she loved so well! Gradually Marjorie's eyes came back to Decimus, and her face dimpled with happy laughter.

"You dear, big, stupid boy!" she said slowly.

"Must I tell you? This is gratitude." Raising the hand that had saved Rand's life she touched it to her lips.

"But this—Decimus! *Sweetheart!* Don't you know, can't you feel, that this," her lips drew near to his, "is *love?*"

THE END